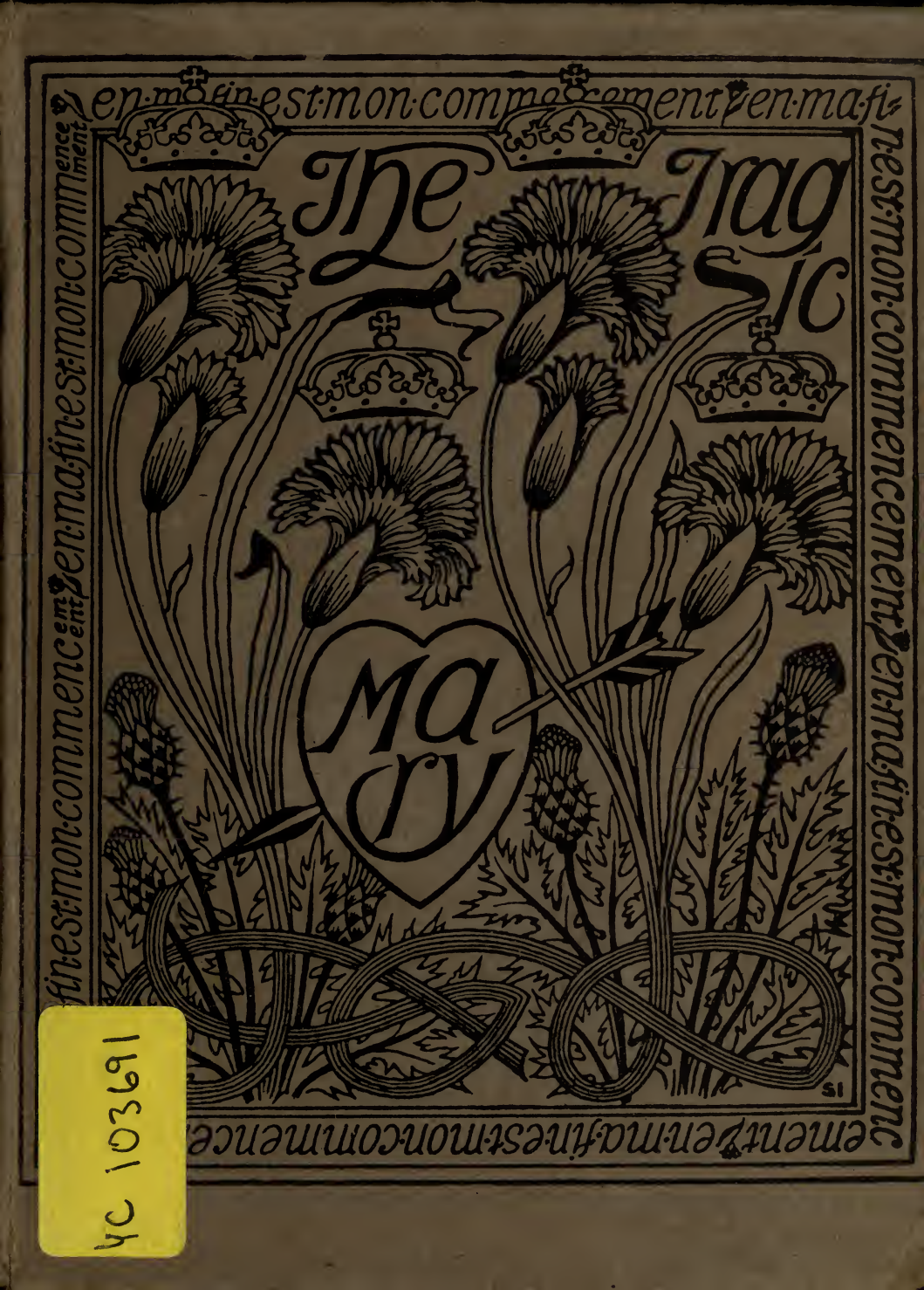

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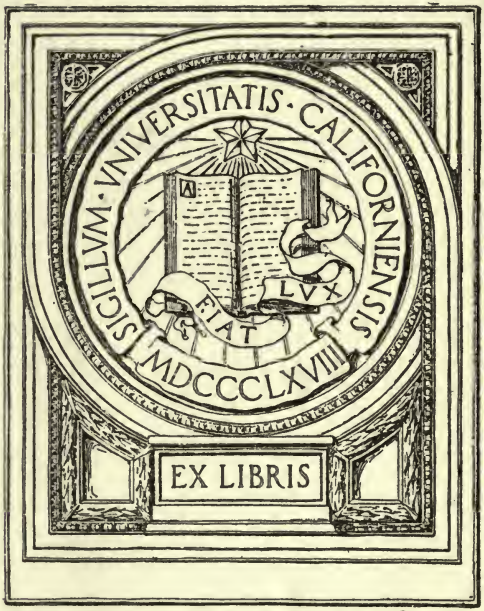

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The Tragic Mary

φρόνημα μὲν πνέμου γαλάνας,
ἀκασκαῖον δ' ἄγαλμα πλούτου,
μαλθακὸν ὀμμάτων βέλος,
δυξίθυμον ἔρωτος ἄνθος·

ÆSCHYLUS: *Agamemnon*

She sees what seed long sown, ripened of late,
Bears this fierce crop; and she discerns her fate
From origin to agony, and on
As far as the wave washes long and wan
Off one disastrous impulse: for of waves
Our life is, and our deeds are pregnant graves
Blown rolling to the sunset from the dawn.

GEORGE MEREDITH: *Ballads of Tragic Life*

CALIFORNIA

The Tragic Mary

BY

MICHAEL FIELD

LONDON
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET
COVENT GARDEN
1890

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English Alumnus

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PREFACE

BEAUTIFUL for situation, happy in the way the light visits her, noble in natural outline, and favoured even in the rise and declivity of her streets, it is nevertheless as the repository of her Queen's tragedy that Edinburgh fascinates us to herself. She is to us what Troy would be could we move now among her streets and palaces, could we learn where Helen stood forth upon the walls, or pace the rooms that Helen made beautiful by habitation. In the apartments of Holyrood we can touch the very silks that Queen Mary handled; the mirror of scolloped edge, graved with alternate doves and quatrefoils, that without contradiction reflected her features, still hangs in her chamber: the flushed tatters of her curtains are before us. And beholding these things we are seized with a passionate desire of access, an eagerness of approach: we cannot pause to wonder, or debate, or condemn; an impulse transports us: we are started on an inevitable quest.

The woman who appeared to certain of her contemporaries to be a princess lacking in no virtue save discretion, and to others a creature full of guile, inconstancy, and

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malevolence, can but expose the mysteries of her nature, leaving us to resolve them. Of absolute knowledge we have nothing; her tragedy, clear-cut in detail, is vague in determination. We know, indeed, that within the compass of her destiny great passions held their course, and great crimes reached their consummation; but we are ignorant to whom to assign the temptation or the guilt. A few hard facts are before us, a murder, an abduction, a marriage; with regard to none of these events can Mary Stuart's will be known. Her portraits cannot aid us even to firm conjecture: the most genuine are the least open in evidence. The face is softly pale; the lower lip is sucked in as one may see a running water caught under by its own little waves; the eyes are oval, languid, full of sensitive reticence; the ample brows disinterested rather than frank, touched with an universal clearness and perfection. We could wish that the crayon of Holbein might have given expression, the self-betrayal of personality, to this woman's rare, unemphatic beauty, and have brought out in each subtle crease of the flesh, by its shadows and smiles, such experience as could not travel to the lips or eyes, and was doomed to remain unrecorded when the artist was Janet, Achesoun, Oudry, or Primavera.

The extremes of antithetical judgment passed on the character of Mary Stuart are presented in the writings of one man, George Buchanan, who celebrated her virtues with his Latin muse, and afterwards transformed them into notorious vices in the reckless pages of his prose

Detectio. He acted the part toward his queen of Stêsichorus toward Helen of Troy, save that the Doric poet, under Heaven's threat, exchanged abuse for praise, the foul accusations for the palinode. Between such devious versions of the same author a latitude pliant and shadowy is left for the psychologist and historian. The wife of Darnley and of Bothwell will be various to various natures throughout the ages: for like Helen she never grows old; her allure consists only with an immortal being, her peerless value is that of a daughter of the gods. It is therefore possible for a dramatist to transcribe his sense of the facts of her life, to justify the vision of her as it has come to himself, and yet be reverently conscious of the splendid and passionate qualities of a former presentment. To a great poet of our time she has appeared in majesty of intellect, conscious of the burthen of her own beauty, and devoting every power of spirit and sense to the reception or excitement of desire. The Mary Stuart who is now in process of canonisation has not yet been delineated; it is possible to dream of her, a creature perfect in action and forbearance from the day of her first communion to her bowing down upon the block. Neither of these ideals (one an incomparable achievement) can be deformed by my rendering of the great Marian legend. My impressions from contact with a personality the facets of which present perpetual change have not been embarrassed or irrelevant, for they have grown from a vision almost to a conviction as I have explored and wrought.

The Queen herself lies sculptured in Westminster Abbey, waiting with the serenity of patience a judgment other than that of men. Yet we are not permitted to withhold our human verdicts, if she is to live as a presence in our midst. We may believe that Clytæmnestra-like she was a woman of haughty counsels and blood-stained career, or that her fame and nobleness were dragged down under a ring-net of conspiracies and detraction, or again that laxity of protest was the basis of her whole tragedy. These beliefs are but conjectures, and the real woman of magical nature must remain undiscovered and triumphant:

kind be time or cruel,
Jewel, from each facet flash your laugh at time.

M. F.

May, 1890.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARY STUART, *Queen of Scots*
HENRY, LORD DARNLEY, *King Consort*
JAMES HEPBURN, *Earl of Bothwell*
JAMES STUART, *Earl of Moray*
JAMES DOUGLAS, *Earl of Morton*
WILLIAM MAITLAND OF LETHINGTON, *Secretary of State*
THE EARL OF LENNOX,
THE EARL OF HUNTLY,
PATRICK, LORD RUTHVEN, } *Scottish Noblemen*
ARTHUR ERSKINE, *Captain of the Guard*
STUART OF TRAQUAIR, *An Equerry*
KILLIGREW, *English Ambassador*
KIRCALDY, *Laird of Grange*
LADY BOTHWELL, *Sister to the Earl of Huntly*
MARY SEATON,
MARY FLEMING,
MARY LIVINGSTONE,
MARGARET CARWOOD, } *The Queen's Ladies*
ELSPETH MENTEITH, *Sister-in-Law to Lethington*
JOHN HEPBURN,
HAY OF TALLA, } *Bothwell's Retainers*
PARIS,
BLACKADDER, } *Bothwell's Servants*

Lords, Soldiers, Attendants, Pages

TIME—The Evening of March 9, 1566, to the Evening of June 15th, 1567

THE TRAGIC MARY

ACT I

SCENE I—*Holyrood; a distant apartment*

BOTHWELL *paces to and fro*

Bothwell

SHE banished me, she did not like my manners;
She banished me, and yet a time shall come
When the dire fetters of a marriage-bond
Shall keep us ever locked.—How coldly March
Whistles through every chink! I hear the tread
Of stealthy feet which seem to move along,
As surely and as soothingly as wind,
Upward to Darnley's room: while far away
I catch the twanging of an instrument—
'Tis Riccio's lute—and, as a door swings back,
Her laughter. I shall win her! Yesterday
I rode my horse straight down a steep decline
With a clear rush: when I came round again
There was a look within her eyes that never
Had graced the sleek Italian, nor the boy

She calls her husband; yea, her lips were void
Of life's least sigh. A second, and she smiled
A glinting smile, and turned away, and talked
Half gaily of light things. My manhood feels
The terror it encloses.—All is silent,
The noise is shut away that seemed to mount
Up yonder. (*Opening a door at back and calling*)
Boy!

Enter PARIS

Paris My lord!

Bothwell Go to the foot
Of the great stair and listen, for I heard
Some unfamiliar movements, yet as slight
As if a bird had thumped against the walls. *Exit* PARIS
That fiddler Riccio, that smooth vagabond,
With ribboned lute, and fat, complacent cheeks,
Has ceased, methinks, his strumming.

Re-enter PARIS

Well, what caused
The flutter?

Paris I stood hearkening, sir: all seemed
As homely as most nights, until I heard
A shivering cry, and then a dull, hoarse roar,
With far-off cries repeated. I am certain
It is not in the court; it seemed to fall,
And fall from upper storeys on the ear.

What can it be?

Bothwell Stand quietly! How it grows:
The doors are opened, and the turmoil leaps
On like a rush of heart-blood, deluging
The air. I will not meddle in the brawl,
For we but hear Lord Darnley in his cups;
This is a drunken bout; we will keep close
Till all is tranquil.

Paris I have never heard
The king so loud.

Bothwell Truly, to-night he seems
More quarrelsome than merry.

Paris Now there rings
Great laughter through the darkness.

Bothwell And I hear
Arms clanging like its echo: soon as steel
Is on the move a man may show his face,
Who hides it from mere riot. Quick, unbolt!

(*He throws open the door at the back and discovers within the hall*, DARNLEY, MORTON, *and the* Conspirators *dragging along* RICCIO'S *body*)

Darnley She loved him—hump and all. The foreign dog!
He had no manners when he came to die;
He whined and pulled her skirts. She does not know
A gentleman's true mark, has no perception
Of exquisite deportment. Why, this churl
Would chatter like an ape when I stood by,

Stretch his gay leg out—thus ! and set his lute
To balance on his toe. It made me sick
Through all my body, and she only laughed,
And said the merry South was in his veins ;
We have not left him much Italian blood
With which to smirk and wriggle.

Morton As I set
My heel upon his clay, I feel my acres
Are sacred from spoliation.

Ruthven Snuff and candles !
I feel my hatred eased, my lustful fire
Of vengeance on the flicker.

Darnley All of you
Rejoice that your own injuries are ended,
Your fears assuaged, but no one thinks of me—
How they would talk together, till he made
Her lips shine with the ripple of her words,
She grew so fluent. When I dressed and came
To stand beside her, she would briefly give
Her eyes to admiration, and then seek
His place among the singers. He has curdled
My blood with spite, and, see ! my hanger sticks
Midmost of all the weapons in his body.

Bothwell (*Apart to* PARIS) Ker, Morton, yonder
Ruthven, who is gaunt
As if the hollow night had yielded up
A ghost to do live crime—all are my foes ;
And by the storm of feet about the courtyard

I fear they hold the palace. Their success
Might turn to my annoyance. And the queen!
Is she in safety? Call my Borderers—ho!
(PARIS *steals to the door and is stopped.* BOTHWELL *advances*)
Darnley These men are mine, and they protect my person,
While I do tardy justice for my wrongs.
This fellow kept from me my crown.
Morton From us
He well-nigh took our lands. We could no more
Endure his watchful envy.
Ruthven I have flung
A deadly sickness off, and from my bed
Risen to exact my vengeance. Detestation
Coursed through my frame like health, and I am here.
Bothwell Is the queen safe?
Ruthven Unwilling to be rid
Of one who had bewitched her, she called out
And sprang before him. I have never seen
Such sight except in hunting, when a creature
Stands up against the hounds.
Morton But no rebellion
Is dreamt of toward our sovereign, for her husband
Is leader of our enterprise and sanctions
With bond and promise everything we do.
Ruthven They feasted—how unconscious of their fate,

Caught in the web of that small supper-room . . .
Morton You stumble, man ; go up and have a draught
Of wine ; the bottles in the cabinet
Are not all broken, and with you the king
Shall reascend to give his wife some comfort.
Darnley Now I have served him out, I shall possess
The matrimonial crown, which she withheld
To please the fellow's malice. Oh, revenge
Can satisfy more utterly than love ;
It kills its object, and the thing is dead,
And cannot reassert itself, nor once
Dispute our triumph. 'Tis a cleanly issue,
That wipes away all foulness and prevents
A lingering stink from the putridity
Of vain abhorrence.
Morton Ay, we kill the vermin
That injures or betrays : you realise
The sweetness of destruction. By and bye
Return and tell us how the queen is faring ;
We would not wish her troubled.
Exeunt DARNLEY *and* RUTHVEN *upstairs*
(*To* BOTHWELL) You, my lord,
Can have no reason for disquiet. Grown weary
Of this man's greed and influence, we ended
His life and our great danger. You shall please
The king if you retire ; it is his quarrel
Fully as much as ours.
Bothwell I will.

Porter (*Coming from the central door*) Strip off
These furs, these silks and velvets from the clay.
He was but dirt when he was shovelled here
From over seas. He lay upon this coffer
The night of his arrival. Heave him up!
And let the old oak be a bed for him
The night he goes away. How shabbily
He slept in rusty cloth! Off with the trappings!
He looks the stranger now.

(BOTHWELL *and* PARIS *return and shut the door behind them*)

Bothwell Paris, I never
Have felt before just what a body is:
We need be full of schemes, resolves, pursuits,
Reckless adventure, master-strokes of passion,
While yet we live; since death annuls all zest
In slavish unconcern. That Riccio, boy,
Was of a teeming mettle and contrived
To grow in honours—now he couches yonder,
And cares for nothing. Paris, what a face!
It makes me greedy to exhaust desire,
And pack the years with enterprise.

Paris My lord,
I never saw such dagger-work in France
As that which pierced him. Six and fifty wounds!

Bothwell I have so much to hope, so much to do!
O happiness! I only look on death
To feel life's manifold inducements grow

More glorious and hazardous than ever
They were before; my every appetite,
Each mighty muscle in me seems to shout
As through a lifted trumpet: *I will live,*
I will possess, and let the universe
Endure my depredations! Paris, we
Have carried slaughter over tawny moors,
The bog-indented borderlands, and snatched
Their prey from felons: thus from destiny,
The robber-goddess of the world, brave spirits
Must capture what she rifles as she runs.
I will at once to work, to opposition,
To covert enmity, to sudden flight.
Those men are false; they make their queen their captive,
And I alone can save her from her doom,
By saving first myself.

Paris God shield us, sir!
That is the city-bell.

Bothwell A demon-crash
Of terror up above us; the black air
Reverberates with action—cries and peals.
We must not lose the moment. Let us thrust
The window open. Can yon jump the height?
Your supple age will help you.

Paris Give the word!

Bothwell Leap! I will follow. (PARIS *springs down*)
Darnley's thanklessness
Pushes in my direction: she will scorn him

With that sick scorn that only women know
Which wastes away all pity. I have felt
No being worth the trouble to my nature
That patience is, save her,—for whom I cherish
A fierce fidelity that means to cleave,
Until it grow to ownership. The winds
Rock about Arthur's Seat, and I could fancy
That in their sound my ancestors bewail
The unfulfilled ambition of their love
For queens—the high Jane Beaufort, and that Margaret
Whom Flodden made a widow. I will aim
Above their boldest mark, and will succeed
Because more mad. My race was amorous ever
Of sovereign figures. (*Springs down*) From the little garden
Below, the lions are roaring through the wind,
Free-throated captives: on this further side
The tumult in the court is pigmy-toned,
And murder is unnoticed. To Dunbar!

SCENE II—*Holyrood; the* King's *audience-chamber*

Enter DARNLEY, MORTON, RUTHVEN *and others*

Darnley She braves me to my face; oh, worse! she lets
Her breath come like a poniard through her lips

In steely sighs ; her glance is roused and dark,
Full of the levin and the thunder-rain.
She said she would not lie with me, nor come
And prattle in my chamber any more ;
She broke from all obedience—ay, and promised
'Twould be dear blood for some of us : her face
Flushed briefly as she said it. Let her threaten
And do her worst.

Morton You do not care ?

Darnley Not I.
Care for a woman's anger !

Morton Did she rage ?

Darnley Yes, silently ; indeed, I never heard
Her voice so still : folk at a funeral
Have scarce a lower cadence. When she poured
The wine for Ruthven I could see she thought
Of blood, she moved so sudden to his side,
And held it 'gainst the flame.

Morton You do not care ?

Darnley Why should you pester with your repetition ?
Care, do you ask ?—And yet she looked away,
Tears in the van of sight, and such a smile
Upon her lips, I tingled : while I stood
Fronting her heedless face, years came and went,
Before the moments forced me to retreat,
As she was turning toward me once again
With new-illumined wrath.

Morton You do not care,
And that is well, for we must make clean breast
Of all our thoughts touching the queen, yourself,
And us, your sworn confederates. To the door
You shall not go. We executed murder
With you, and you must give us from henceforth
Protection and fidelity.
Darnley My lords,
As I began . . .
Morton Nay, that is not enough;
As you began you must continue. Now
There can be no retracing of the way;
You cannot climb again to the far verge
Of your attempt, and if you once look back
You are as good as dead.
Darnley God's sake! You gather
Most rudely all about me. Of a truth
You are not courteous and you are not faithful;
You call me an assassin, when your swords
Slew Riccio. Sirs, I will not thus be baited.
Stand further off! Now what is your complaint
That you should stifle me with shoulders thus
Set round me, and intolerable speech?
Where have I failed to please you?
Morton Nay, not failed;
We would instruct you, bid you recognise
Your destiny is welded into ours
By doom, by justice, by this written bond.

Do not shrink back, and do not misconceive
Our warning and entreaties. We exact
From you but courage; you must make yourself
Our leader, and our captain in affairs
From which you will not budge.
Darnley I am your king.
What further do you want?
Ruthven Good Lord! You wanted
The matrimonial crown.
Darnley And have it now.
Morton What is a crown derived, a crown that clips
The short curls of a man because he weds,
That owns the woman's rule!
Darnley It irks my heart
To be her paltry follower, her mere shadow.
Morton Then from our hands receive the crown itself;
Be more than leader, sovereign: then we march
Wherever you shall list, as you command
Will do . . . But play the coward!—
Darnley My senses whirl:
You seem to threaten and you seem to offer
Kingship and service. Do not press around
With good and evil meanings. To your wishes
I give a strained attention.
Morton I will use
The plainest words: if once you waver, once
Forsake our company, you will not find

That we are jesters who make light of speech;
You will be met by earnest, silent men,
Who handle an irrefragable bond,
And care not how they punish the offence
Of breaking its least claim.
Darnley You do me wrong,
And your distrust is harsh and insolent.
Admit my father to this colloquy;
I am alone 'mong many counsellors,
And need more judgment than my youth possesses.
You dazzle me and trouble, for you talk
With fervid, strange unkindness.
Morton We admit
Lennox; he joined in our conspiracy.
Summon the earl. *Exit one of the* Conspirators
Ruthven My head, my head!
Morton You suffer!
Ruthven. Regard me not,—as yet my wits are mine
To listen to your motions.
Morton Look at him!
Ruthven Check-mated.
Morton Ay.
Darnley (*Apart*) My heart is in my mouth;
They are obscure and deathly in their manner,
And in their speech constraining. Oh, alone!
My mind is diverse as a sapling-tree
To and fro i' the wind. I have no help;
She is upstairs. I know not what to do.

She would not lift her hand to succour me,
Although she is so prompt and politic.
How came I looped about by all those coils?
I breathe in giddy ignorance. O God,
My deed of vengeance was direct and simple,
What treasonous net is this they make of it?

Enter LENNOX

Father!

Morton My lord, our triumph you have heard;
The villain is despatched, the queen is weeping
Within her room, our prisoner, and the palace
Is by our men invested. This your son
In modesty is fearful to receive
From us the title which his wife has lost,
Ruler of Scotland.

Lennox He were best contented
With what his marriage gave him.

Morton Folly, man!
He must secure our lives and liberties
By the indemnity of that great name
That makes ill-doing loyal.

Ruthven For he is king,
Crowned by our voices, sceptred by the dagger
He left in Riccio's flesh! And if our king—
What of the queen?

Morton She has but one defence:
The fate of giving birth is on her now;

That is her nearer destiny. Methinks
No blossom that has fruited brags of life,
Or tarries for the winter. Well-a-day,
Destruction has a future.
Darnley (*Apart*) They are cruel,
My blood is warm with fear.
Ruthven In high-set Stirling
The woman shall be happy; she can rock
Her bairnie's cradle, sing the lullaby,
Or strain her bow-string on the garden plot:
While with their sovereign-king her faithful nobles
Do the man's work and govern.
Morton Will her chicken
Prove boy or lass?
Ruthven A tetchy, female thing;
Its dam is weak in colour. Of myself
I wager it is feminine.
Morton Perchance
Some will denounce us.
Ruthven At their least attempt
To wrest the queen away, we mince her up,
And toss her from the terrace.
Morton All is even
And straight for our advantage. Let us part;
Long counsel hinders consequence. (*To* DARNLEY)
Heigh there!
Darnley What is it. . . . What?
Morton A warning! Cleave to us,

Or fear the quake of ruin. *Exeunt the* Lords

Darnley Are they gone?
All is upturned and fiery in my head;
I might be dying, for the arras-trees
Tumble together toward me, and the walls
On yonder strip lean o'er me rockily
As if to crush.

Lennox My boy, you must remember
We share a common peril.

Darnley Hold your peace!
A murder is not cruel when the stab
Is brisk and of the moment. Riccio fancied
No coming wounds, while threat of violent chance
Heaves through my brain. I am a minor still,
And downy on the cheek; they are old men
Whom death confronts if they but look at time,
For me it is unnatural and shocking
An end should haunt my morrow.

Lennox We were cozened,
And are undone.

Darnley A pack of murderous wolves!
My desolation stuns me; if I lay
Within the lonesome chapel down below
I could not be more single. How I fume
With projects of escape!—but I must ponder
Less hurriedly. That stairway is my access
To her, to extrication.

Lennox Up! she is

Your wife, and yonder passage you command.

Darnley True, and there is a pliant afterthought
In her excessive rage, a lull to catch.
She loved me once, and in her disposition
Once to have loved holds fast against all strain:
I have a bosom-link if I can reach it,
That will not let me drop.

Lennox God's sake, ascend.

Darnley What noises sough and scurry through the air,
And beg for victims; the whole darkness seeks
A prey. My auguries are horrible,
And I am deadly faint. These little steps
Now seem such weary stones. *Exit*

Lennox He will not triumph
Without humiliation—that the goal
A woman's anger drives at. He is knocking.

Darnley (*Within*) My Mary!

Lennox Now he pauses.

Darnley (*Within*) Let me in!

Lennox Silence and wind! . . . I cannot hear him, yet
He speaks—

Re-enter DARNLEY

Darnley She will not open. Go away.
If we are found together they will deem
We hatch some private business. It is fearful
To be alone, but better than with you,

For that is dangerous.
Lennox Why so it is.
Bid me good-night for courtesy, my son.
What will you do?
Darnley Go up again at dawn.
Lennox Plead for your father. *Exit*
Darnley . . I but called to quiet
Beyond that door—no answer and no breath;
Only one secret movement as one might
Hear a live body stir within the coffin . . .
A lunge, then noiseless time.

SCENE III—*Holyrood; the* QUEEN'S *bed-chamber, in dawn-light. She sits by a chill fire, with her women round her*

Queen (*Shuddering*) The wind has dragged my wimple from the spot;
His bloodstains are uncovered.
Mary Seton Turn away!
(*Replacing the veil on the floor*)
Now all is cloaked.
Queen You need not fear, my girls,
That I shall moan again. Light makes the past
Grow strange. Your hand, my Seton.
Mary Seton To the window?

Queen. Yes. It is really dawn! Ah, I must pray,—
(*Falling suddenly and passionately on her knees*)
Poor soul, for he was faithful.
Mary Seton (*To* MARY FLEMING) When last even
She suffered, sharp and rigid, I was sure
Her throes would come, or death.
Mary Fleming King Henry's voice
Pierced her instead.
Mary Seton She never stirred for it;
Her eyes grew sable, and I felt her frame
Like iron within my arms.
Mary Fleming We stood by her
After for many hours.
Mary Seton You fell asleep.
Mary Fleming Nay, I remember . . .
Mary Seton When you woke again
You found her sitting by the fire alone,
With a wild flicker on her open lips.
Mary Fleming I fear she is not praying. (*The* QUEEN *rises*) Madam, leave
The window. You have faithful friends below.
The secretary—
Queen Your Lethington?
Mary Fleming My queen's
True servant, who will hasten to relieve
Our fortunes, soon as known.
Queen What does he count
Against my brutal enemies? A jar

Grates in my memory with every pulse
That gives me clearer consciousness: the shine
Of daybreak lies so broad upon the fact,
The outrage, the malevolence. Alas,
Entangled night could better be endured
Than this discernment. Mary Mother, vainly
The matin beauty chastened me.
Mary Seton I hear
Steps, noisy through their earliness, but fast
And upward by the sound.
Mary Fleming It is the king;
He knocks again.
Queen Unbar, my Seton. Pass,
Chères amies, to my audience-room awhile.
[*Apart*] My very blood flies from him.
Mary Seton (*Opening*) Sire, come in.

Enter DARNLEY

(*Apart*) He looks as flagging as if hoary age
Had caught him in the dark.

Exeunt MARY SETON *and* MARY FLEMING *within*

Queen (*Preventing* DARNLEY) You shall not kneel.
(*A pause of silence*)
Darnley My Mary, 'tis confession, and I come
Acknowledging my fault, though late sincerely,
With prayers for your indulgence. I am stricken
To see you stand like this, an attitude
For which no line is fashioned. Turn to me

Only a little. I have been decoyed,
And dragged into conspiracies against
Myself as much as you.
Queen Sire, you may ask
Forgiveness, but I never can forget
The wrong you did me; 'tis indelible
As what I saw in childhood, and will haunt
My deepest, far, old age. My memory is
Most jealous in its pain: you have forgotten
The kiss of tender Judas quality
You gave me—there is snake-bite on my cheek
When I recall its print; you have forgotten
The violence of your hands upon my frame
A moment after; yea, you have forgotten
The bloodshed at my feet, and at my breast
The pistol of a comrade; yet more cruel,
You had forgotten I was near such state
As has its kindly privilege wherever
Man is conceived of woman.
Darnley (Apart) Oh, her face!
I hate her shaming lip.—Is all affection
Lost for your husband?
Queen 'Tis impossible
To search my heart just yet; it is too ruined
For any answer. In the sleepless night
No stir save that of my endangered babe
Has touched me to a feeling or a hope
For any soul that lives. You shall not speak

Thus nearly of our tie, since you confess
That you have been both thankless and disloyal
To what in me is sovereign, and the source
From which derive your honours.
Darnley Would you die
A butchered captive?
Queen Did you purpose this?
Unbosom frankly.
Darnley I have been distraught;
Ambition has beguiled me. My true princess,
I will be traitor to these miscreant lords,
Who terrify and threaten. Take these bonds.
(*Giving her some papers*)
Queen Unfold them; let me read the articles.
Stand off! I will interpret. (*After reading*) There is mention
Here of my ruin, of the overthrow
With your connivance of the Catholic,
True faith, of your sole kingship: trivial thoughts
And weighty matters here are strangely mingled;
An enterprise of most malignant folly
And mounting, blasphemous intent set down
With childish unconcern. Where is the plan
Of David's murder?
Darnley Do not fix me so
With your dead eyes. I think you have no feeling;
You are all wan and dry. 'Twas the proposal
Of these confederate renegades to kill

Your servant, and they jeered at me the way
A husband cannot brook ; but I repent—
You do not listen.
Queen (*Staring at the papers*) I have read enough.
Take back the papers.
Darnley What a grievous sigh
Breaks from you ! I am surely a lost man,
Except I tender pardon to these rebels.
Grant them forgiveness ; do not let me perish
For my first, wanton error.
Queen Henry Stuart,
Had I inflicted on you the foul'st wrong,
The most impenetrable, secret shame
That man can suffer, with less cruelty
You had devised, in justice, your revenge.
O God ! to see you scared and garrulous,
Who should lie stunned before me. Do you know
What you have lost, what perpetrated, what
Irreparably injured, that you clamour
For life ; and will life be of worth to you,
Your life, while mine keeps tenure of the past ?
Hush ; leave me ! I must put away these fierce
And beating memories—for from Holyrood
I must devise escape. Remove the watch ;
Give me some freedom. . . .
Stay, you are the father
Of Scotland's king, in that respect you claim
My tenderest vigilance. Put by your fears.

That you could so have used me! You will make
Amends for this, I hope. Discharge the watch.
Exit DARNLEY
So much to do, so thick a knot to break!
(*Bending, she writes in her Book of Hours*)
O Lord, avenge me of my enemies.
I set it down; make Thou a bond with me!
Have we not common cause? These hypocrites
Pull down all holy things. My sturdy mood
Bides not the click of rosaries: receive
This sentence writ across the martial psalms,
And levy for me from the ends of heaven
Thy laggard legions; make me, in thy stead,
Victor and sovereign.
There is stir without
I'the courtyard. (*Looks out*) 'Tis my brother; he has ventured
From England for my succour. Ho, my girls!

Re-enter MARIES

Sweet Fleming, help! There is a spring of joy
Loosed at my heart.
Mary Fleming What comfort?
Queen (*Pointing to* MORAY) He forgets
That we were enemies; he comes unpardoned
To turn the keys on my captivity.
I tell you, girls, a few, short weeks ago
Had any made me present of his head

The proffered gift had pleased, such grievous hate
Ingratitude stirs in me. He repents,
He seeks me in calamity; no power
Henceforward shall estrange us. Am I weeping?
Oh, think, my Maries, I looked up to him
As my good, elder brother, when his face
Was the one, homely thing I saw in France;
And he through life has checked and counselled me,
So sober is he in his statesmanship;
He fought against my marriage—Ah! 'twas that
Drove him to England.

Enter MORAY

James, had you been present,
You had not suffered them to handle me
So cruelly. This kindness on your part,
To visit me in prison, sets my tears
At once free from their confines.

Moray For your sake
In sooth, my sister, duteously emboldened,
I came from Berwick.

Queen You have heard the fate
Of David?

Moray Such disorders must be quelled.
Rely on me, and I will promise you
They shall no more recur.

Queen Recur—a murder,
The murder of my servant at my feet!

I have no terror of such repetition
Now you are here to help me to take vengeance
On David's slaughterers.
Moray Speak more tranquilly.
It may be that your husband is not clear
Of this conspiracy; to shelter him,
Best summon these unmannered noblemen,
And, with due censure, pardon. Do not break,
So vehement!—from my embrace. Your safety
Necessitates a politic disguise.
Queen (*Apart*) Then I will feign to him, the palterer!
He shall not help me.—James, we will consent
To hear you plead for all of those who seek us
With reverence on their knees as guilty men.
Go, to confer with them.
Moray I will remonstrate,
And bring them to avowal of their fault:
Meanwhile take rest. How haggard are your eyes!
You give me anxious thoughts. *Exit, after embracing her.*
Queen Erskine was present
When David fell, Traquair was at my side;
There are some fearless hearts within the walls.

Re-enter DARNLEY

(*Apart*) Patience! A hail-storm rushes through my blood
At sight of him.—What knotted brows, as puzzled
By sole and unaccustomed sovereignty!

Confide to me, my lord, how you will part
Your honours 'mong these malcontents, to whom
You owe your exaltation. I bespeak
A place for Moray—let him have your love.
Darnley I hate him.
Queen You have reason; he is heir
Through his ambition to your foster-crown.
Shall you retain in trust my chancellor?
Will Ruthven be in favour?
Darnley Do not mock me!
Mary, I am entreated as a slave,
Threatened with instant ruin, thwarted, bribed;
I will do anything to break away
From this besetting insolence. I suffer;
My life, I fear, is put in jeopardy.
Queen Then for sweet life's sake—your's, my lord,
I mean,
The life you value—trust yourself to me;
Go to your chamber, bid Traquair and Erskine
Thither to instant colloquy, on show
Of some official duty, then dispatch them
Hither in secret; I already weave
A plan of exit through the Abbey vaults.
You look bewildered. Almost I incline—
At least I am most covetous to hope
This handsome, boyish face has been a witness,
A mere vexed witness, of these infamies.
Darnley Believe it, Mary; I am still so young . . .

Queen In tutelage, remember, then to me.
Now we must separate. The open door!
(*She motions to him to leave her by the main staircase, not the tower-stairs*)
Darnley Your hand!
Queen They will discover us.
Exit DARNLEY
Alone,
At this slack hour when David used to play!
Giustizia, giustizia! I have learnt
That watch-word; some day I will give it back,
And still the hollow, merry-making sounds
That 'gin to whistle when I turn to rest.
It will be dark to-night within the vaults,
And cold: my babe is stretching forth young limbs,
Life's easy way. If I were struck stone-dead
For horror at the grim, distorted tombs;
If I should bring forth a strange, spectral child,
To catch the bats that flit from roof to roof,
And wink at daylight! God, it shall not be!
For I will nurse him royally with my soft,
Wild, wayward songs, and he shall lie and laugh
Across my knees, until the happy tune
Drop off into a drowse.

Enter ERSKINE *and* TRAQUAIR

Good Erskine, come!
Traquair! kneel both of you, and vail your brows,

For you are young to touch the mystery
Of which I bear the burthen . . . I commend
To you the guarding of my motherhood,
As simply as I trust my soul to God.
You have my blessing! Swear no loyalty,
My true-born gentlemen. To-night attend
With horses at the half-sunk Abbey-door.
There is great heart in me.
Erskine We shall not fail.

SCENE IV—*Holyrood; the vaults under the ruined Abbey*

Enter the QUEEN *and* DARNLEY

Darnley What whiffs of air! The place is like a skull,
A stony cap for draughts. Some ancient king
Plays tick-and-touch with me. Zounds, it is jolly
To feel the creeps o' Time.
Queen There is an echo;
Move quietly . . . wherefore do you gasp and sigh?
Darnley I cannot get along; this broken pavement
Keeps tripping me. So! We have passed the place
Of the raw grave.
Queen It swelled across my heart
That he was yonder—David!
Darnley My true servant,
I shall regret him every day I live.

Queen And with good cause. Speak low! Here is the issue,
The moonlight, faithful Erskine. (*To* ERSKINE) To your croup,
My squire! What heat there is about your face!
Traquair, you give me courage. I am safe.

SCENE V—*Dunbar; the great hall of the castle at dawn. Servants stirring about; some lighting a fire*

Enter DARNLEY

Darnley Why how now, fellows, do you know your place?
1 *Servant* Have you some tidings of the queen? Despatch!
2 *Servant* Who is arrived?
Darnley Arrived! The king—thank God!
1 *Servant* Is he below?
Darnley He'll kick you down the stairs
Unless you mend your manners. Get a fire.
3 *Servant* Who may this be, a muffled, slinking man?
1 *Servant* We doubt his purpose. (*Mockingly*) Save your majesty!
How fares the queen?
Darnley Out of my sight, you knaves!

2 *Servant* 'Tis growing light enough to track the course
Of horsemen. Quench the torches.
Darnley Let them be;
It was the wild and streaky dawn that set
My wits a-shaking. Will you bring me food?
What, am I unsubstantial? They shall pay
Who give me insult.
2 *Servant* Have good patience, sir;
We wait the queen's arrival.
Darnley Let her dawdle
Till Ruthven overtake her: I am safe.
To see her laugh and gossip on the croup
Of Erskine's gelding! My good Naples courser
Would not be kept her paces.—Look you, varlets—
I hate their sneering eyes about my face—
Get to the stable, groom my horse, for then
You'll serve me humbly.—That last bit of travel,
After the queen grew sluggish and I tore
Alone across the stony country-side,
What was it that encountered me, that shape
Of straggling insolence that caught my reins,
While the wind burst in laughter at my back,
Coarse-lunged as these attendants? 'Tis not meet
For royal persons to endure the air,
Exposed to such temptations. How these creatures
Peer at the doorways!—Pile the faggots up!
I say I will have warmth! You, Blackadder,
I know your hang-dog face. Where is Earl Bothwell?

Cannot you speak?

Blackadder He rode with certain lords,
Huntly and Seton, Fleming, Livingstone,
In the late starlight to receive the queen.
Hark! There is bustle in the court below;
You may espy their troop. *Exeunt Servants*

Darnley (*Looking out*) No languor now!
A lusty woman blushing like a bride
Soon as that thick-limbed earl bends over her.
I will crouch sulky by the fire and note
What care she shows me.

Enter BOTHWELL, *leading in the* QUEEN, *accompanied by* ERSKINE *and other nobles*

Bothwell Safe, my sovereign, safe—
Since in my custody.

Queen Earl, at Dunbar
I put all troubles from me; though a queen
Without a country, I am gay at heart
For sight of your true faces. Erskine, see
How bright a blaze!

Erskine Beseech you, madam, rest.

Queen Ay, after breakfast. Had you met us, warden,
Ere the last watch, our roistering company
Had put you to your guard. The midnight faintness
Wore off, and my young squire encouraged me
So loyally, I could put all fear away,
And prop my drooping head against his shoulder

To watch the moon winning the adverse clouds
To wear her colours. Sooth, we moralized . . . .
Bothwell Well, rest you.
Huntly And be bounteous of your smiles
To faithful subjects.
Bothwell We are soldiers all.
Queen O Huntly, would I were myself a man
To carry my own vengeance in my hand!
I envy you your swords. Within a day
This treason shall be flying fast to England,
To France, to Spain . . . and if Elizabeth
But listen to these calumnies—
Erskine No need
Of foreign princes.
Queen Nay, my bonny captain,
While there are hearts like yours. (*To* BOTHWELL)
Beseech you, host,
To give us breakfast.
Bothwell If you be not dainty.
We have no dishes. Oaten bread, and milk,
Eggs—raw.
Queen Then, Erskine, in your next campaign
Boast that your queen herself set forth your meats.
Good gentlemen, I have an appetite
That will not bide delay: let me be cook,
And I will quickly put you in such stomach
To fight as shall regain my ravished kingdom.
Do not be so amazed, or watch my face

As I were not in earnest; spread the board.
Still lost! And is it verily such art
To pass from shell to broken shell the yolk,
Nor mar the spheral yellow in the change?
Erskine The marvel, madam, is the ministry
Of those translucent hands.
Queen The admiration
That hinders you from service we disdain.
You shall play courtier when we have a court,
Meanwhile you rein our horse, and, at command,
(*Giving him a dish of eggs*)
Fry these upon the fire. Such sputtering dread
Make havoc with our foes! I cannot rest
With traitors in my palace.
Bothwell In two days
You shall wipe clean the rooms, if with their blood
The surer cleansing. I will furnish you
A body-guard, fierce men of Liddesdale,
Full of the border virtue; while you rest
From that mad, midnight gallop and its pains,
An army will engird you silently.
(*The* QUEEN *approaches* DARNLEY *as she breaks an egg*)
Queen My husband, surely you will credit now
I can afford protection? (*To* Lords) You would deem
That I belied our consort if I told you
That he forsook us in the mid-distress
Of our too laboured journey. I, you see,
Have something of the cares of motherhood,

Which he who has occasioned them forgets.
How do you, Henry? An uneasy brow
Even in the ingle-nook?

Darnley (*Rising*) I would be private. I am disesteemed,
My Mary. Do you wish that we should lodge
Together? None will credit I am king.
Speak to them.

Queen Nay, our host assigns our rank
And disposition.

Bothwell (*To Servants*) Give this gentleman
A lodging in the north, beside my chamber.
(*To* DARNLEY) I will convey you to your solitude,
And then attend the queen.

Exeunt BOTHWELL *and* DARNLEY

Queen Now we will feast.
(*To* ERSKINE, *who offers to help her in cooking the eggs*)
Captain, I'd trust you with a thousand lives—
Had I a thousand—not these housewife's toys.
Were I but let alone
I could do all things perfectly, the least,
The greatest. Erskine, was not the young air
Of ravishing, strong freshness? Oh, I feel
This is the daybreak of my fortunes. Sit!

Re-enter BOTHWELL

So our good host will give us leave, I claim you
Each as my guest. Ah, this is happy queenship!
Eat, my strong soldiers! With a glorious rush

We will retake our royalties.
Bothwell (*Rising*) We pledge
Triumphal entry into Holyrood;
Health to the queen—God's grace that she is safe!
(*They drink*)
Queen My lords, 'tis very life to me to breathe
Where no suspicion is. With openness
I ever give my favours, fellowship
To those of mating wisdom. . . . My dear servant,
Whose office none can fill, shall be avenged:
In 'midst of this hot grief 'twere hazardous
To mingle retribution—punishment
Shall be allotted presently: meanwhile
We crave your patience with our erring husband,
As with a man entangled in the toils
Of evil counsellors; we condescend
Ourself to pity him; and for our sake,
Beseech you, eye his faults with lenience.
Erskine (*Starting up*) Madam,
Before my face . . . .
Bothwell You are too young a witness.
How say these noblemen?
Huntly 'Tis not his murder
Of Riccio that we stick at—the assault
And hurt he did your majesty provoke us.
A sneaking, vile poltroon!
Bothwell My prisoner.
Queen True,

We both lie at your mercy.

Bothwell Renegade!

Huntly A royal pensioner—no king of ours.

Bothwell He shall have justice at our hands.

Queen If I
Can hope to pardon, an imperilled mother,
An injured wife, a broken-hearted friend,
You can be dumb, till with my utmost patience
I seek to make him sorry for the past.
He is much spent. Myself will bear him food.

Bothwell You shall not visit him. (*To* ERSKINE)
Captain, your service;
Diet Lord Darnley as his state requires.
Huntly and Seton, Fleming, Livingstone,
A hasty council must be held at noon;
Our troops keep pouring in: until that hour,
Madam, you must repose. There is a chamber
Full, to the east, of sunshine and of sea,
There will I lead you: not an anxious thought
Should cloud your brows.

Queen My lord, when you are near
I feel my throne impregnable. Alas,
My weariness comes over me, but simply
As a tired child I shall just turn to rest,
And think of sweet to-morrow. We have yet
Our throne to climb, our unborn king to save:
All, all is in your keeping.

Bothwell Be content.

SCENE VI—*Holyrood; the library.* LETHINGTON *is discovered, leaning back on a couch, a small dog across his lap, in his hands "The First Buik of Rolland Amoreuse."*

Lethington By the special providence of the love-god mine eyes have been turned aside from beholding ought but vanity. While the wicked devised mischief on their beds, my deepest solicitude hath been to remove the mockage from my auburn eyes, to extrude from them the keenness of the politician, the coolness of the cynic, the dancing valour of the wit, and to fill them with that lonesomeness of fasting desire that is mortal to women. [*Reading*] This incomparable princess of Albracca! I will dote on her perfections, till the Lord James look in on me; then—but *The Manuel of Morall Vertewis* is at hand (*Turning over the books*) Romance and theology—it is all one. The head, as the heart, hath its ferment, its aspirations, its disease. Tales of the nursery! yet I mock not at man's childishness. His imaginations affright him; the heavenly ministrants protect. Bairns must have bogles, though they dwell in their father's house. (*Reading*)

Enter MARY FLEMING

Mary Fleming Mr. Secretary.

Lethington Yes, Angelica.

Mary Fleming You are so distraught, you do not even recollect my name.

Lethington Divine one, I called you by your proper name, my angel.

Mary Fleming I care not for your flatteries. Let me look into the history. Is it thus written? (*Trying to snatch the book*)

Lethington I am reading, Angelica, of one in love, one who encountered a marvellous disdain. (*Reading*) *Le bon Renaud—*

Mary Fleming Is that the name of your hero?

Lethington You mistake; 'tis a lady who suffers this extremity of love—ebbed from roses to lilies in a day: you yourself, my sweet Fleming, look not paler on the instant.

Mary Fleming You have been playing tricks with the story; you are like the good Renaud himself.

Lethington Heaven forbid! yet he was a comely youth; auburn eyes, and, I doubt not, auburn hair that crept into the laces of his collar. Finding this delicate Adonis asleep one day by a fountain, it is written the lady was so ravished with his beauty she fell to sprinkling him with flowers. Imagine the dismay of the *pauurette*, when, despite her courteous salutation, he shook himself free of her dainty prickles, mounted his horse, and fled.

Mary Fleming *Le bon Renaud!* Had she a visage so prodigious as to make him afraid?

Lethington The freshness of a rose of the orchard.

Mary Fleming Then you belie her.

Lethington It is written, she kissed the very flowers 'gainst which he had slumbered, thus accosting them: (*Reading*) *ô herbes verdoyantes! que vous eſtes heureuses d'auoir touché vn viſage si aggreable! Que je porte d'enuie à voſtre felicité.* 'Twas, sweet Fleming, her weakness to desire *un beau garçon* in marriage. The lad had yellowish hair and she worshipped him.

Mary Fleming She was a fool.

Lethington Nay, the fool saith in his heart there is no God. She would have fallen under the censure of good Mr. Knox; call her rather an idolator.

Mary Fleming If it so please our "great god the Secretaire"—an idolator. (*Curtseying low to him*)

Lethington Yet I would never have suffered the beautiful creature to pass away unsaluted. For it is written, on his awakening she made him a deep reverence.

Mary Fleming Then you find not Angelica in fault; though like lady Venus she raved over her mortal, it was in his sleep, or at worst, after his departure. It is rumoured, Mr. Secretary, you are about to retire from the palace.

Lethington If I presently ride away . . . . .?

Mary Fleming *Que je porte enuie à voſtre félicité!* For who would linger in Holyrood under the nose of the Lord James? Though he perch demure as a hooded falcon his dreams are of bloodied feathers. I fear me

even now he is devising some ill to my mistress. But you—can you not rescue her? Did you know of this? I mean poor David's murder?

Lethington Pretty one,
None told me of it; knowledge, recollect,
Must enter by the ear.

Mary Fleming If I believed—

Lethington You loved me, I would let these sovereigns run
Amuck at their own ruin.

Mary Fleming Do not think
Of me; in sooth, it scarcely is a time
For private thoughts.

Lethington Yet the whole universe
They say is swayed by love. Shall politicians
Treat Cupid as an interloping god?
He is my bosom-counsellor, and teaches
My pen to rally Cecil on his rheum;
For never, as I tell the minister,
Do state-affairs so trouble me, but one,
One of the four and twenty hours I give
To merriment; for those that are in love
Are ever set upon a merry pin.

Mary Fleming Not if their lady scorn them.

Lethington Pardon, sweet!
For my romance instructs me that fair ladies
Faint for our noble beauty—while at will
We take them or we leave.

Mary Fleming But does your heart
Instruct you it is wise and chivalrous
To leave the queen uncomforted? You love her?

Lethington Ay, some day I shall haply die for her.

Mary Fleming You are so dreamy. I will go away.

Lethington Report me of the queen!

Mary Fleming Am I your spy?

Lethington Never, my girl; my own wits shall piece the evidence of my senses. How shall a man deal with rumour? 'Tis the question of the hour.

Mary Fleming It were best you should not anger me—we are parting.

Lethington Nay, if I leave you angry, I leave you to a long remorse. You will have no peace till the wronged exile's return. Mary, there is but one thing I trust in a woman, and that is the certainty of her unreason. She will give herself a month's penance for a moment's unkindness. So adieu, sweet Fleming, unsaluted.

Exit MARY FLEMING

If I could give my sovereign liberty!
She sent for me, and, lifting up her eyes,
Put in them such a world of trust, I promised—
We promise children the impossible—
All should be well. A noise upon the stairs!
Tumult, affright!

Enter the QUEEN'S Ladies *distractedly*

Mary Seaton O, Mr. Secretary!

We are in great amazement.
Lethington What is this?
Good gentlewomen—your discomfiture?
Mary Seaton The queen is fled; 'tis rumoured to Dunbar;
And the king's rooms are empty. There is noise
The palace will be sacked.
Lethington Fled to Dunbar!
Take comfort, ladies; she is in the care
Of loyal subjects.
Mary Seaton But the earl is frenzied,
And full of oaths.
Lethington I will assuage his fears.
Let me not see the Maries falling fast
As apple-flowers in a late gale of May.
Cheerly, sweet damsels! Ere the week be ended
Your mistress will return.

LENNOX *enters as the* Ladies *retire*

(*To* LENNOX) My lord the earl!
Lennox He saved his life and left me in the lurch;
Curse the deserter, the unnatural,
Ill-hearted son! He casts me to his foes
As easily as an abandoned mistress
Is thrown to raging kindred. Succour me,
A father stripped of filial affection,
An old, unrooted man, whose enemies

Are closer than his child.

Lethington Be calm, my lord,
And all things cease to dance—most chiefly fear,
Pale whirligig of our intelligence;
Go you to Glasgow, wait until your springal
Return to nature; he will fly his parent
In vain; the stars wink, and my prophecy
Is on the road betimes.

Lennox The boy I cherished
In every whim and appetite.

Lethington Be certain,
Good father, you will catch him at your side,
If you go pray the weather-cock, an idol
Set up in God's high places.

Lennox Curse him!

Enter MORTON, RUTHVEN, and MORAY

Morton Ay,
We curse him with mailed fingers. *Exit* LENNOX
That old traitor
Is withered by a threat.

Lethington Our chancellor
Can make his glistening eyes as terrible
As terrier's teeth. I marvel not, my lord,
That Lennox is affrighted. Why, your anger
Starts from you as a sweat.

Morton No parrying now,

No playing fast and loose. You own this flight
Is of your provocation.
Lethington Did you trust me
With carriage of your business? For my part
I had been well content that destiny
Should muster slowly as Elijah's rain
From hand-breadth cloud to blackened firmament.
Morton You have no zeal, you never would have thrust
Your hanger in that damned idolator.
Lethington Well, for religion, I confess the trickle
Of precious ointment adown Aaron's beard
Attracts me; I discern a fascination,
A charm about its unctuous descent.
Man's worship as it furthers the accord
And unity of nations touches me.
(*To* MORAY) Lord James, your honest brows are malcontent;
When good men cloud I feel solicitude.
The queen, 'tis said, is safe.
Morton And we undone.
She will disburthen Darnley of our treasons,
As cunning as a whore. Our instrument!—
You keep a polished smile—do you not hate him?
The young deserter!
Lethington Hate! With circumspection.
Morton I hate him, but with all the pains of heaven
And hell, with God's great rancour against sin,

And with the petty fiends' malevolence.
'Tis the slipped victim rounds the lion's breast
To his great, wailful bay. Maitland, I suffer,
If I have cast desire upon a deed,
Immeasurable pangs.
Lethington No action yet
Is possible. Take horse—
Morton To banishment!
Lethington To brood at Newcastle
How best to undermine this arrogant
And towering house of folly.
Morton In my brain
The bloodhounds are already on his trail.
To think a female should unhug my grip
Of heritage and spoil! That great Tantallon,
Those stretching churchlands!
Lethington Grudge not God his own
Fair acreage!
Morton But I wanton with the lands
Of these fat priests; they are my buxom dames,
Put to rank purpose by idolatry:
No scruple of the conscience in their use;
With them I ease my lust.
Ruthven Shall we not fly?
There is a draught. Can you not shut the door?
It blows up that dark passage. Blood can freeze
I tell you. Quick! To England.
Morton (*Shaking* RUTHVEN *off*) You are fevered.

(*To* MORAY) Let's hold one thought in common in the dark.
Moray, your policy?

Moray I shall not budge.

Lethington Faith, we must keep him stainless; he must proffer
Our humble loves to the fair Amazon
Now girding for the battle.

Morton (*To* MORAY) Since I go
South to your empty lodgings by the Tweed,
A bond betwixt us twain! I thought on you
Mewed up in England, and the forfeitures
Of your estates if Riccio's parliament
Had looked upon your treason. 'Tis your time
To prove your mettle. (*To* LETHINGTON *and* MORAY)
Who first summons me
Home to my honour shall not lack support
In any private end.

Moray I shall not fail

Exeunt MORTON *and* RUTHVEN

(*To Lethington*) Your further counsel. I who treated her
As something of a prisoner am exposed,—
Or shall be, for already there is bruit
Of a swift-mustering army at Dunbar,—
To shattering reprisals; yet to flee
Would argue guilt.

Lethington Flight were insane in you,

Since you are clear of fault. Let us despatch
Straightway her faithful Melvil to the queen,
Bearing a letter that professes you
A dunce at these devices and offended
At that which must offend her to the quick.
Show yourself hurt, yet patient to endure
Unjust suspicion; then abide her coming
As confident and lowly as the just
Await the day of judgment. Morals, Moray,
Are your peculiar portion. See, my desk
Is at your service.

(MORAY *sits at the desk and writes.* LETHINGTON *surveys him, pacing up and down*)

She will pardon him,
And I, who with long-sighted constancy,
And pliant diligence aspire to win
A neighbouring crown for her, must be removed
From her misliking eye. I shall retire
Awhile with Athol.

Moray (*Rising with letter*) This will tutor her.

ACT II

SCENE I—*Holyrood; a room in the palace, on a brilliant August morning*

Enter DARNLEY

Darnley

I FALL into disuse; behind me lies
A ghost, a din of music; and before
An army of afflictions with no aim
But to descend on me. All fellowship
Drops from my haunt and from the August days,
That are grown old, immomentous, and dull.
Good God, what will become of me!

Enter the QUEEN

From her
I can command submission: if she gave
As soft compliance in affairs of state
As in my whims and pleasure it were well.—
Sweet madam.

Queen Henry, to this document
Affix your signature. You truant boy,
I have been asking vainly for the king

From room to room.

Darnley And I must sign this paper
Whate'er it breed? Doubtless your Lethington,
Though he seem banished, set it into shape.

Queen He is forgiven, and now must be restored;
But this is no state-measure—a request
To Selkirk's sheriff and the Earl of Bothwell
To make all ready for a noble hunt
In Meggotsland. Dear, this conspiracy
Is mine; its single purpose to unite
Our severed lives, and give us sylvan days
Of reckless happiness: we two together
In the clear light will chase the stags, and then
Rest, and make love, and rest beneath the trees.
Will you not sign this letter?

Darnley It is strange
You find no office for me in concerns
Of state necessity. I apprehend
As well as you; in business show despatch:
Yea, like the Spaniards, make one gallant charge,
That would be fatal in its energy
If long continued. To my cost I know
That Moray is a traitor, but you smile
And kiss me; I am certain Lethington
Is full of guile, my serpent enemy;
You lift your brows and kiss me. How I hate
Your kisses! You forget all ancient wrongs,
And each man has your ear—except your husband.

Queen My prince's father! since our boy is born
I think of you across such innocence,
So sweet a favouring road, when I arrive
My soul is full of grace. I recognise
Your smiles, your dimples, the vexed way you veil
Your eyelids in so dear a delegate
Of your dread sovereignty that all offence
Is washed from recollection.
Darnley 'Tis in private
You fawn on me. James is your minister,
The Earl of Moray has your confidence.
But I will have his life and rid myself
Of your contempt. Faith, I can turn you pale
And red, although you think I am a puppet,
A king of rats and mice.
Queen You do not threaten
The Earl of Moray?
Darnley For I will not live
To see you wrecked by traitors. David knew
The way to cozen you.
Queen Unspeak that word—
You shall not charge the dead.
Darnley I will begone.
Queen Return on your obedience to my feet.
Now Henry Stuart, give yourself the lie,
Confess your slander.
Darnley You mistake my meaning;
For David Riccio was a better man

Than this vile, royal slip. Your testy humours
Will drive me mad.

Enter MORAY

Queen Now press your accusation.

Darnley (*With confusion*) My lord, I have been moved to say and threaten,
Through common rumour, things that otherwise
I had not thought of.

Moray (*To the* QUEEN) Mary, if my life
Be taken from you, you will be deprived
Of your one prop.

Queen It is too true, and therefore
I warn you of the malice in men's hearts.
Had any given me warning there was plot
'Gainst David's life, he had not fallen a victim—
You shall not. Leave us, Henry, if your shame
Crave not an ampler pardon.

Darnley I will keep
Away from you; it is not a light matter
To chide, and give dismissal to a king. *Exit* DARNLEY

Queen My brother!

Moray (*Caressing her*) 'Tis not fit that you should weep.
The kingdom prospers. Recollect, my sister,
I have the Stuart courage. . . . . Mr. Craig
Presents a fresh petition from the kirk,
If you can listen to it.

Queen But your life—
I cannot think of business, when my heart
Is full of anxious care.
Moray I cannot think
Of any private danger, when religion
May be advantaged by my constancy.
You wax in all men's favour through your kindness
To the true faith. Ah, were you in its pale!
I have two jarring cares—a Romish sister,
And God's elect. Come to the ante-room.

Exeunt together

SCENE II—*A house in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh*

LETHINGTON *and* ELSPETH MENTEITH

Lethington Yes, Elspeth, 'tis the pleasure of my sovereign to visit me in private. To-day she will stream down to me in a vision. I am full of devoutness and elation; a king's favour is as dew upon the grass.

Elspeth Is that scripture?

Lethington A proverb—truth's worldly discretion tripping on the tongue; but, for your better contentment, know that it is written within the covers of the Holy Book.

Elspeth I am too simple for controversy; I cannot answer you back, as the Lord when Satan tempted Him.

Lethington Elspeth!

Elspeth But I am glad the Earl of Moray is your friend.

Lethington For he is of good understanding in the fear of the Lord—nay, sweet Elspeth, cloud not—it is the beginning of wisdom.

Elspeth Do you think I may tarry till our sovereign appear? She is a royal lady.

Lethington She is a distracting woman. What is to be done with that intolerable puppet, her husband? He moves about the glass-house of diplomacy with the violence of a bull. It must needs be that offences come, as the Highest foretold, but woe very naturally falls on that man who brings his swart wares to the light.

Elspeth O brother, is this true religion? Dear Janet ever found you talked too smartly of God.

Lethington I speak of Him familiarly as my Friend—with kindly criticism.

Elspeth He will not suffer such irreverence. Mr. Knox . . . .

Lethington He apprehends the Highest with the organs of hatred. He hath handled Divinity wellnigh as roughly as Dunfermline. What is left makes good stabling for the herd; the creature of delicate nurture cannot lodge there.

Elspeth Yet you joined the Lords of the Congregation.

It was Janet's comfort on her death-bed you would not serve idolatry.

Lethington Serve! I am the servant of no man, save Time; I wait on his shiftiness with the patience of a lover. I flatter him, I defer to him: but, Elspeth, you have nursed your grandmother's dotage; is not childishness ever in the grasp of its attendant?

Elspeth I am convinced you are an atheist. You make me most unhappy.

Enter the QUEEN

Lethington (*Stooping and caressing* ELSPETH) Poor, pretty lass of the darkened conscience. (*Looking up*) What, yonder! It is my royal mistress who enters, as noiseless as the light and as welcome.

(*He kneels;* ELSPETH, *with a low reverence, goes out*)

Queen A silver voice! Alack, good Lethington,
Mine ears have been so dinned with ill-report
Of those who spend their labour to defame
And bring you to discredit, that I scarce
Know how to reckon you.

Lethington A rigorous judge
To whatsoever mutinies against
Your grace's honour. Servant to your rashness,
The waywardness that mars your delicate
And swift discernment? Slaves must minister
In such unworthy offices; but when
My queen is most herself, at her right hand,

Breathing her pleasure, zealous in despatch,
Painstaking in expedience, she will find
Her sometime secretary, now her friend,
And true, untitled servant.
Queen Lethington,
I live now but to pardon and make peace;
I am a mother.
Lethington May your favouring gift
Breed amity a woman's silent way,
And set us in the sun.
Queen Could I accord
The enmities betwixt my warring nobles,
I were most happy. In my child-bed sickness
I made it the sole pastime of my thoughts,
By gifts, by reconciling offices,
And frank partition of my gold and jewels
To lull contending hearts. 'Mong my bequests,
Your name, my Laird of Lethington, stands coupled
With the Earl Bothwell's, since I reckon you—
He for his valiance and rough honesty,
You for your subtle, extricating sense—
My two most weighty subjects . . . . and at war?
Nay, for my sake, to pleasure me, the breach
Must be closed up betwixt you.
Lethington Haddington's
Fairy nunnery severs us.
Queen You must divide
The apple of your discord.

Lethington Madam, to divide the sweet cloister were to sever Christ's seamless robe. Let us not rend it; let it fall rather to my lot. But it is not, my sovereign lady, by grants of land, nor even by the twinned bounty of your gracious bequest that we can be accorded. Those on the right hand and the left in the parable are of opposed nature; and the office of the sovereign, so it please you, is to set a great gulf betwixt them. James Hepburn will make for your undoing and the enmity of England wherever he meddle; my lesson, in the lenient hours when you permit me to tutor you, hath been ever deference to Elizabeth.

Queen 'Tis too palpable you woo England's queen.

Lethington Not for her beauty. If for her possessions, we covet one object, her crown, and for one head. Boast of it in your dreams; but by day propitiate in patience. Were I not your true servant, I should scarcely dare to raise tempest on your brows by my monition.

Queen The English crown! It is my dearest hope:
I tell you, Lethington, one little hour
I felt the sense of glory and expanse,
The opening of my nature's very leaves.
'Twas on the day of the great tournament,
After the peace of Cambray, when the king
Trusted by aid of Spain to stablish me
Sovereign and Catholic on English soil.
I was but scarce sixteen. Oh, I remember

I shook all sickness from me in the bliss
Of my true dignity; the royal arms
Of England and of Scotland, with the crown
Of France above them, blazoned on my car.
Place for the Queen, and when the populace
Added *of England*, something changed in me,
As when the sky first kindled into stars.
Dreams should be sluggish, this encloses me,
And eddies me away. I cannot rest
Till I have crossed the Border; Halidon
Must feel the pressure of my feet, the guns
Of Berwick must salute me. Ah, the dream,
To wrap you in its current! I confide
To you the secrets that I dare not drop
In my soul's ear—if you could understand!
A cry for empire pierces up my heart
As sharp as murdered blood, spilled on the ground,
Presses for retribution. I receive
The sighs I breathe; if I am left alone
I catch across the vaults of ancestry
Reverberating sounds. I do not urge
My claims, a racial importunity
Leaves me no peace until its suit be stayed.
Does there not grow in kings a royal gift,
Tradition of the conscience?
Lethington Better use
They make of time who let the travelled future
Determine their day's destiny, than those

Who give to ageing instinct and tradition,
That ever stays at home, a dominance
And derogating lure. My dearest queen,
Seek not the crown of England as a toy.
Be patient; set yourself to govern now
Sole as Semiramis, and be remembered
Hereafter, 'mong adoring men, a goddess
And heavenly Aphrodite.

Queen Still the dream!
My Lethington, you are restored to all
Your ancient honours, and are free to pluck
Of any my possessions so you cease
Contention with Lord Bothwell for these lands.
Let me accord you; I will bring him down
With the Lord James to-morrow; for I pine
At the council-table for your lambent lips:
Our politics have no celerity,
Our embassies no state, our correspondence
No grace and candour while our flower of wits
Is absent from the court.

Lethington There must be peace,
Peace and goodwill when angels condescend
To be the peacemakers.

Queen I always was
Too credent, and must marvel at myself
Who love to listen to your eloquence
And fell persuasion, till I half-forget
This friend of Mary Stuart's is her foe's

Beloved ambassador, is Cecil's hope,
With Randolph has too frequent colloquy,
And soothes Elizabeth—Oh, I forgive;
It is my common office.
Lethington Doubting queen!
But rank me very traitor to my brows
With those presageful eyes that look beyond
The sin to the appeasement, and remit
Still unconceived offences: such foredoomed,
Inevitable grace must draw transgressors
Repentant to itself.
Queen There is a bond
Betwixt us twain.
Lethington A bond no tragedies
Can snap.
Queen Farewell.
Lethington (*Apart*) To think there was a time
I cared not if I never saw her face.
Exit, conducting the QUEEN

SCENE III—*Holyrood; a room overlooking one of the entrances to the courtyard*

MORAY, LETHINGTON, ARGYLE: *on the table before them a letter*

Lethington (*Taking up the letter*) The Earl of Lennox to his sovereign. He threatens that his son will leave the realm.

Huntly Threatens! Such departure were most seasonable.

Lethington If the boat be leaky, and the start at the equinox, our best wishes were answered.

Huntly Yet the queen could not speak to us when she came hither to impart her trouble.

Lethington There was such a fit of weeping in the clouds, I entreated her to retire to her chamber. We must prosecute this business.

Moray It is natural she should affect to be anxious to detain him.

Lethington It is unnatural he should essay to depart—blessed beyond dreams by her clemency, honoured by her in his dishonour, reasoned with when he should be arrested. . . . .

Moray Yet if there were anything serious in her conduct at which he blushed! The queen's indiscretion is

not of a character to bear report. Her gestures and freedom. . . .

Huntly But to leave her! and that splendid boy on her knees.

Moray Well, we must question the king on this matter. These unconfirmed imaginations profit nothing.

Lethington (*To* MORAY) My lord, pursue the young monarch with your prayers; but by no means intercept him with your remonstrances. If heaven make straight for our goal, counter-action is impiety.

Huntly We must deal gently with the queen.

Lethington In her widowhood. (*Rubbing his hands*) I could drink to this crazy bark! May it be stuck round with barnacles, invaded by the undying worm! The solution, as ever, is to be looked for, as the pippin of an apple, at the core. But listen! I am incautious in my ecstasy. Gentlemen, there is noise in the courtyard—an arrival.

Huntly A thick, deep voice. Good Lethington, look out.

Lethington (*At the casement*) Into fairyland! For there stands our sovereign-mistress, a white wonder of beauty beneath the torches, and draws in her young prodigal with golden arms—

Huntly Why do you pause?

Lethington Because he pushes her,
The brute—No, Huntly, put away your sword,
She is secure and militant, a creature
To hold the world in awe; he staggers back.

Huntly He must be drunk.
Lethington Now he is on again!
Intolerable braggart, mow and mow,
Can you not answer?
Moray Let us hasten down
To smooth this rebel humour.
Lethington (*Turning from the casement*) She is gone!
Huntly, one need not be a Catholic
To bless this Lady Mary.

Enter QUEEN

Queen Dear my lords,
We have to-night a truant at our doors,
Who will by no means enter, till we yield
To his enforcèd terms. As in a tale
Of fairy, we must give impossible
Commands, and look for such obedience as
The elfin-wands enforce. I am ashamed
To copy his rough manners; he insists
My doughty councillors should leave the palace,
Ere he will condescend to mount our stair.
'Tis late; I may not ask you to break up
A loyal concourse summoned to mine aid;
Yet I will pray you softly to adjourn
Till morning when ourselves will make you judge
Betwixt our warring royalties.
Lethington Betwixt
You and a thankless rebel.

Moray Since my presence
Offends him. . . .

Queen 'Tis a mood one must not question;
A private humour that in lesser place
By wifely tenderness were cleared away.
Is there a man among you dare confess
He ne'er came home impatient to his wife?
My Lethington, sweet-tempered bachelor,
Prepares a bright-lipped negative. But you,
Huntly,—and you?

Moray Those whom the Lord hath joined
We will not put asunder. May your meekness,
Coupled with fear, remove his jealousy!

Lethington (*In a low voice to the* QUEEN) *O Dea certe!* (*Aloud*) May your heavenly grace
Confound his churlishness. We will retire. *Exeunt*

(*The* QUEEN *beckons from the window; in a few moments* DARNLEY *walks in sulkily: she throws herself at his feet*)

Queen Nay, do not speak to me; it is enough
That you are come. What, put away to sea,
My prince; what, wilfully embark for death,
Leaving your own bright realm? Have you no treasure
At home that you must seek the Golden Fleece,
My wayward Jason? If indeed you should
Desert me, faithless, if you should desert,
Why, I might turn Medea; for there is

All magic bound in me that womanhood
Inherits, or makes rape of from the gods—
All good and evil herbs. I need to cull
No simples; closed in crystal prison-caves
I guard strange alchemy. If I were wronged
The fatal way—*deserted*—I would draw
My spells from Hecate: the poisoned robe,
The philtres that impoverish, the bright spectres
That dance before a victim to his doom,
Would all be mine; for I must be beloved,—
The goddess breathes in me; and if denied
My wedded lord, if he should once desert me,
I will ride boldly through the world, enchant
Its heroes, soften its great, reckless hearts,
Engage on ventures of high hardihood,
Visit strange lands and new—and at the last
Win of admiring Jove consent to marry
Achilles in Elysium.

Darnley Do not mock me!
I care not for your fondling; you shall learn
Obedience to my government. You prate
Of that same Colchian dame—she cut in pieces
The brother who fled after her and threatened
To part her from her love; she minced him up
To collops: do you so with the Lord James,
Or I will do it for you. Let me have
The state you gave me when we first were married.

Queen Oh never! You have forfeited your place

Beside me on my throne; in every act
Of kingship you have shown yourself a traitor,
Dissolved my Parliament, imprisoned me,
And, not to quicken into light your prime,
Obliterated infamy, endeavoured
To set yourself usurping in our stead;
Touch not our royalties, or, if you touch,
Kneel and adore them: 'tis to them you owe
Your life, your pardon. Henry, think awhile
What I have overlooked. The tender ties
That knit us in our honeymoon, before
Your mad ambition, are fast-knotted still.
I made you knight, and by the accolade
Of knighthood you are sworn to my defence,
To loyalty, to truth. Ah, if your eyes
Had not been fixed on the investiture
You would have known there was no further honour
Left for my distribution. Earl of Ross
I think I belted you, and then you smiled;
Your vow was to remain my chevalier,
And at the word I gave my very soul
Away—I cannot revocate the gift.
If you should go to sea, I fear such pressure
Of recollection, mingling with desire,
Would work on me, I should put after you
One day in a lone vessel. Promise me
You will remain?

Darnley With Moray, Lethington,

Your circling Protestants?
Queen I am so tired,
I cannot reason with you. For to-night
Will you not tarry with us? There are many
Who hate you in the palace . . . .
Darnley I can take
My rights, although you make yourself so coy
And condescending.
Queen You are safe with me.
Come to my room; you will not?
Darnley As I please.
Queen Why then, good-night. To-morrow we shall meet
Before the lords; you shall recount to them
Your fault or mine; if you have planned this voyage
With just occasion, or set out to sea
As any wanton runaway. Good-night. *Exit*
Darnley St. Andrew, but I will not follow her,
Nor ever do her bidding any more;
At Jedburgh she shall hold her justice-courts
Alone; her solitude will grow acute,
And she will sue me to return to her.
And yet she has such carriage when she sweeps
Before me! and I cannot say what ails,
If she should bring me to the council-room. (*Listening*)
She has not put the traitors out of doors;
They plot a storey off—I will retire,
And rate her for transgressing my commands. *Exit*

SCENE IV—*Jedburgh; a room in the* QUEEN'S *lodging:* MARY SETON, MARY LIVINGSTONE, *and* MARY FLEMING *at work.*

Mary Seton Is it not happy that our queen is restored to us? Since the Lord Darnley hath denied her his company, she is as fond and familiar as in her teens.

Mary Fleming Or when, a widow of twenty, she took us in turn to be bed-fellows. And we watched her waking in the early light; it was more regal than a sunrise.

Mary Livingstone As you repeated to the Lord Châtelar in your foolishness. But they were merry days, and our queen the queen of frolic. Then came the pretty stripling of Lennox—her Maries were clean out of credit; she required no service, but remained shut up in her chamber with her winsome cousin for warden.

Mary Fleming She is terrible in love: no compromise betwixt ecstasy and death. She lay rigid on her bed for a day after the king, in presence of her nobles, first cleared her of fault, and then bade her contemptuously adieu.

Mary Seton She has rallied quickly, though a fit of passion broke over her when she heard she must hold the justice-courts alone. Oh, that we could hear of the embarkation of this Sit-in-the-Sulks at Glasgow! No one regards him further than he is agreeable to the queen.

Mary Livingstone But she, poor lady, still loves him. She will look out from the window at the birds, wheeling about the heavens, and fear they will have stormy passage. *Exit* MARY SETON

Mary Fleming Why will you torment poor Seton with your tattling? When a woman sets her heart upon a woman she is inexorable in jealousy.

Mary Livingstone Too true! Shall I suffer and be silent?

Mary Fleming I am glad I have a lover of my own.

Mary Livingstone You forget, I have a husband; but that mars not my constancy—a man needs so little of one's nature. It suffices him if one's complexion be fair. But there is not a balmy nook in one's soul undiscovered of her; she desists not from divining till she hath access to the honey-cells. I have had brave thoughts since she questioned me, and I will love her to my life's end.

Re-enter MARY SETON; *she resumes her embroidery*

Mary Fleming Well, I grant her incomparable in her blue Highland mantle.

Mary Seton You mistake; in her red camlat, rayed with the broken pearl broidery.

Enter the QUEEN

Mary Fleming Fie, fie! and her crown somewhat rusted! But hither she comes in her passamented cramoisie.

Mary Livingstone With her silks and chenille.

(*They rise to greet the* QUEEN, *and lead her to a canopied chair.*)

Mary Seton Dear Madam, you are wondrous patient in your stitchery.

Queen I can take my sewing, Marie, into the council chamber, scarcely into the assize court. To-day there is a brief respite from official cares. . . . I must close the bud of this tulip with my silks. The work, you remember, is for the king.

Mary Seton I marvel you have even this leisure.

Queen A languor has crept over our courts. The aggrieved make no charges, and it is rumoured we must to-morrow to Hermitage, to my Lord Bothwell, for further material on which to execute justice.

Mary Seton Methinks, Madam, you take your Lord Justicier's grievous sickness too light-heartedly.

Queen My good warden! But it vexes me to think how he has blundered. I ordered him to Liddesdale to make a strong jail of his fortress, and lodge in its dungeons the offenders for whom my justice-course had been prepared. He left the castle slenderly attended, was cruelly assailed by strapping Elliot, and, when Robert of the Shaw brought him home senseless on a litter, was not permitted to pass the gates till he had promised life and liberty to the masterful garrison of miscreants.

Mary Seton Think! He was wounded.

Queen Yes, but was it not

A reckless sortie that has set at large
The lairds of Whitehaugh and of Mangerton,
With sundry of the Armstrongs? I am here
To break the strength of such, and find my powers
And office ineffectual through his fault.

Mary Fleming My sweet queen, you are growing rigorous
As the Lord James. 'Tis these six busy days
That have so hardened you.

Queen Ay, every morning
I have ta'en counsel with my tapestry—
This brave, blue arras! Have you noted it?
The judgment of King Solomon. How finely
He extricated truth, beneath the clamour
Of clinging, wild affections: sentence these,
And guilt will blab you out the truth as free
As fluent honesty.

Mary Fleming The Border courts
Had been a fair state-progress if the king
Had not so waywardly forsaken you.
At the mere hint of this my Lethington
Comments with bitter tongue; the people marvel
To see so wondrous, solitary, white
A justice. Why, at Stirling you would sit,
Peruse, and sort your jewels by the hour,
Making such pretty presents and bequests
As set us weeping. 'Tis the deep affront
Of being thus abandoned . . . .

Queen Marie, Marie,
Your tongue runs to disorder, and must suffer
A moment's durance. Rim this slip with gold,
And work in silence. (*Rises and walks apart*) I am strangely sick
To-night, and with that wanton loneliness
And dizzy solitude that lengthen out
The vacancy at bottom of my heart.
It may be even now that boy of mine,
Cruel as Cupid's self, and capable
As he of smiting inward, has ta'en flight
For ever from my shores. He said to me
It should be long, so long before I saw
His face again; and all my humbleness
But strengthened his resolve. My love, my love!
(*Returning to* MARY FLEMING)
Ah, you have done your task, and gentle eyes
Pardon my admonition.

Mary Fleming Dearest queen,
You tremble.

Queen Haply I have caught disease
From the close air and crowding of the courts;
Or it may be the rancour that one leaves
In human hearts, howe'er one govern them,
Sets me in this despondency.

Mary Fleming The ride
To Hermitage will freshen you. I trust
You will set forth to-morrow.

Queen That must be
As the Lord James determines; he directs
Our every step.

Mary Seton (*Looking at the* QUEEN'S *work*) It is a pretty sleeve.

Queen If it might give contentment! Every stitch
Is a caress. Well, we must drop no tears
Across the burnished broidery. Take your lute!
Nay, give it me! If music is played soft
At amorous, dusky hour,—why, poets say,
It draws reluctant lovers to its course,
As a lone, female dove with luring note,
Draws her mate homeward on firm, open wings.

(*Sings*) *She was a royal lady born,*
Who loved a shepherd lad;
To bring the smile into his face
Was all the care she had.

His murderers brought a bloody crook
To shew her of their deed;
She eyed it with a queenly eye,
And leapt into the mead.

And there she settled with the lambs,
And felt their woolly fleece;
It was their cry among the hills
That brought her to her peace.

And when at night she folded them,
Outside the wattle-fold,
She took her lute and sang to them
To keep them from the cold.

She was a happy innocent
Whom men had sought to spite.
Alack, no sovereign lady lives
A life of such delight.

For no one crossed her any more,
Or sought to bend her will;
She watched the ewes at lambing-time,
And in the winter chill.

And when her flock was scattered far
One day beside the brook,
They came and found that she had died,
Her arms about her crook.

She had no memories to forget,
Nor any sins to weep;
O God, that I might be like her,
And live among the sheep!

Enter LETHINGTON

Is Lethington a listener?

Lethington Almost wearied

With your good brother's anxious colloquy,
Who would in my executive be mate,
I came, my gentle princess, to your door
For such refreshing as your happy wit,
Clouded with mildness, ofttimes doth bestow
On your taxed servant! But, alack! the matter
Of this rare song, the tears that break it off,
Forbid me to find comfort in the voice,
Or in the picture (*Bending low to the* QUEEN) though 'tis ravishing
As museful Clio should forget her scrolls
With Euterpe to passion on the flute.
Why do you sicken thus of sovereignty,
Who, capable and sole, can bind in one
The jarred and restless factions of your realm?

Queen Du Croc has been with me.

Lethington And he reports
The king still obdurate. To sulk at Glasgow—
Believe me, he will find it sorry sport.
Have but a little patience, like the man
Your swerveless equity confesses you,
And all will be amended.

Queen You are gay,
You soon will be a bridegroom.

Lethington From a rose
Though one may pluck a cluster-bud, one bows
Before the air-impregning majesty
Of the mid-fragrance with a lingering joy.

My buoyancy is for no private hope,
'Tis simple exultation in your clear
Supremacy, and excellent discretion.
Be mirthful, dearest princess.

Queen If amendment . . . .

Lethington Verily, madam, if we look closely, the policy of God is ever directed toward amendment; one can discover in it nothing of a destructive cast. The eating of the apple was in all likelihood but partial, as Proserpina, for devouring a few seeds of the pomegranate, abode in hell, yet in consideration of the undevoured mesh of vermilion had leave to open half her nature to the light. All is not lost, though Lord Darnley devote himself to folly. Consider, fair governor, what is the office of justice with regard to folly. Does she water it with her tears?

Queen I will not write to him; I will keep silence.

Lethington For a love-ditty would but swell his presumption.
Have confidence!

Queen I will immediately to rest. Yes girls, you may carry me bedward. Do we travel to-morrow?

Lethington Almost with the first sunbeam. (*She gives him her hand.*) Sheltering sleep
Soothe these storm-swollen eyelids!

Exeunt QUEEN *and* MARY SETON

It becomes
A simple, pious action to remove

The worm at festering havoc 'mid the leaves
Of this incomparable flower. My hand
Is delicate in surgery. (*To* MARY FLEMING *as she passes out*) Dear, good night.

SCENE V—*Hermitage Castle; an upper room:* BOTHWELL *stretched on a couch. He turns, with closed eyes, to* PARIS.

Bothwell The water seems to rustle round my head.
Why should our stream move as in fresh attire—
The silk hiss of a woman?
Paris. It is not
Hermitage Water rippling by your tower,
But . . . wake, my lord! . . . the queen.
Bothwell I cannot move,
With all these hurts that kneel upon my frame,
Nor rise to bid her welcome to my haunt.
O red-cap Soulis, my predecessor once
Within this fort—old witch, endow my bed,
My sickness, with a strength of conjuration
Satanic and delicious to her sex
Who visits me—thus prostrate.

Enter the QUEEN, MORAY, *and* LETHINGTON

Gracious form,
I cannot show allegiance; fates forbid

That I should kneel to you, or bow beneath
The proffer of your hand. You do me grace,
And I receive it merely.

Queen We forgive.
How does our Lord Lieutenant? Moray, see,
These bandages are wounds that in our service
Were taken deep . . . But will the leech reprove,
Boy, if your master talk with us?

Paris No, madam,
My lord is mending well.

Queen Untoward Justicier,
Your courage has deprived us of your counsel,
Which in our need we seek. I pray you, Laird
Of Lethington, prepare the questions weighty
That hinder law, unanswered. (*To* BOTHWELL) For a while
We must discourse of various things—your gashes,
The exploit that entrenched them where they are,
And of my savage ride. The unwarmed breeze
Took influence from the earth, and smelt of moss
Till it was sweet as keen; the moorland region
Shone grey and swelling, stud on hilly stud,
Like a gigantic shield; nor were there any
Among us who could find a certain track
To this sequestered castle.

Bothwell Our strong winds,
And unyoked, grassy uplands never served
Such office as to-day—enamelling

Your silver beauty thus. It is a sight
Would sting death to revival.
Queen My warm colour
Is new-lit by our speed, so dangerous :
Your countryside is held, so dedicate
To felon outrage.
Lethington 'Tis a sorry tract
On which to venture forth; one almost might
As well put out to sea in ignorance
Of compass, shoals, and weather-signs. My lord,
Among these moors, these billows marked in turf,
The queen was well-nigh lost.
Queen You see this stain
Along my habit . . . .
Bothwell Ha, the bogs are deep—
My neighbourhood has sullied you with mud;
Shame on the black disloyalty!
Queen We christened
The stumbling-place *Queen's Myre.*
Moray I understand
That grave discourse will not afflict the earl;
Is it not time for business?
Queen Nay, the claims
Of courteous gratitude are sparely paid
Until we hear the tale of that brave day,
Which wellnigh cost us our lieutenant. Moray,
Fetch me a seat. (*To* BOTHWELL) Ah, look not self-aggrieved;

You, who have slain our traitors, must not chafe
Forbidden slighter service to ourself.
(*Aside*) The weakness of his voice and hue, for all
The muscle-corded arms, is piteous matter
For any woman's heart. (*Aloud*) Your story first;
Let deeds approve good counsel.
Bothwell (*Apart*) Magic help me!
Wild, local wizardry be on my speech!
(*Aloud*) This fortalice was crowded as a prison
With foresters and dalesmen, violent thieves
Reserved for justice, when, eight days ago,
Leaving my loutish servants far behind,
I crossed yon wood of alders.
Lethington Folly, folly!
The subtle value of that everything
Called life escapes attention. I had held
My safety dearer.
Queen Spendthrift gallantry,
Adorable misdeed!
Bothwell Among the stems
And tangle of dusk branches, face to face,
I met the outlaw Elliot—hereabouts
Called John o' the Park—a shaggy man, who paused,
And asked his life as if it were a coin
I carried in my pocket. Merrily,
For scorn will make us merry when we hate,
I told him of my heart-felt satisfaction,
If justice set him free. The snaky villain

Slipped from his saddle down, and stole away
Behind the brushwood: with a pistol shot
I brought escape to earth, and from my horse
Sprang to secure the prey. Another moment,
And I had pinned him! but an unseen stump
Must stretch me o'er its lumber in a fall
That shattered sense. The miscreant from his brake
Crawled forth and struck me, body, head, and hand,
With three, vindictive blows that bit so fiercely
They woke my spirit; and with such a vengeance
As that we deal in dreams I plunged my dagger
Twice through the craven breast: swoon overcame
My rage, I lay in quietness blind as night's,
When lifted by my vassals.

Queen Oftentimes
A page of Plutarch has more swept my heart
Than has the valorous air which I have breathed
This morning, like a bird: your story, earl,
Eclipses both in prevalence. Continue!
The man was straightway slain?

Bothwell His body lay
A mile off on a little, open hill.

Queen Is there no more to hear? It was a fight
Like those upon the famous sands of Troy,
And ended scarcely otherwise—a cloud
Came on the wounded hero as a god
Saved him from death. Is there no more to hear?

Bothwell Of combat nothing, of disaster still

A trifle : when my bearers to the door
Brought me, no soul would open, for the keep
Was under capture of the bandits lately
My prisoners, who refused with brutish mouths
To let me have a resting-place until
My servants, in my name, would swear that nothing
Should hinder their departure or imperil
Their forfeit lives.

Moray So justice for this year
Was mangled in these parts, vile Liddesdale
Re-fortified with villains.

Lethington True, I smelt
Impolicy in hardihood.

Queen (*Rising*) One act
Of daring feeds a scantness in the land
Ten penal judgments cannot. (*Apart*) How is this?
He has my hand; his lips are free with it,
As was October's climate on these steeps
Awhile gone by. I do not recollect
Intending such a favour. (*Aloud*) Is there not
Legend of hidden terrors in a place
So stern as this and desolate?

Moray Time flies;
One third part of the first hour of the two
That we can spare for consultation passes.
Shall we not put our questions?

Queen Brother, wait!
Mine is not answered.

Bothwell From remotest years
Has this great, silent country known of things
That talismanic, dire, implacable,
Have been conceived and done within these walls.
Queen Ah, the streams sang so eerily, as if
They knew but time-worn ballads. To my shame,
I feel a strangeness here. The exercise
Has stunned me with delight; my limbs are tired,
My head asleep—only my heart is strong
With effort in my side.
Bothwell They say at noon
The midnight elves are vigilant, as deeming
The zenith sun broad Luna; in the light
They weave unearthly bondages with chaunt
That rings in destined ears.
Queen Beseech you, lay
Some food and wine within the ante-room.
I cannot cope with law until refreshed,
And trembling less from haste.
Bothwell Go, Paris, set
Our oldest bottles forth.
Queen I will return.
You must advise me quickly, for we ride
To Jedburgh in full afternoon, so rough
And pathless is our journey. We are glad
To find you better, for believe the truth—
That we are sorry for your hurts.
Bothwell Ah, Madam,

Fate struck me for this bliss. I am content
To bleed, if you will come to me.
Queen (*Apart*) O God,
His glances pierce defence. I must not stay.
(*To* MORAY) Lead me to entertainment. (*Apart*) I
am ill.

SCENE VI—*Jedburgh; the* QUEEN'S *Chamber. She lies straight on her bed in a trance.* MORAY *and* LETHINGTON

Lethington A crisis! You are rarely in at crises:
Lord Moray finds they tax the stoutest nerves,
Their mere approach dictates a change of air,
A distance from their neighbourhood.
Moray My friend,
Face my position: the invidious chance
That gave me access to all state and grandeur—
Propinquity, no right—attaches blame
And ill-surmise to every word or movement
With which I wait on fortune. Oftentimes
To be away is the sole cleanness I
Can show to gaping libellers.
Lethington You miss
The fine attractions of uncertainty,
Unless you wait upon her fluctuant face,

A-wooing her in person.
Moray 'Tis a service
Too warm for me till now. (*Going up to the bed*) Is this a corpse?
The lids are stony; in the opened mouth
The air stays idle.
Lethington Ah, poor sovereignty!
A husband's little cruelties have brought her
Thus subject unto death. It startled me
When, like a snowdrift loosening from a wall,
She slipped adown her horse into my arms.
A heavy faint—such whiteness!
Moray I had noticed
But slight indisposition as she rode;
It came on at the journey's end.
Lethington The air
Was dark and bitter when we reached the town;
I caught a cold, a swimming rheum. For that
I have to thank his Lordship of the Marshes,
Whose wounds are quickly better, for they say
He rides here from his den.
Moray To find her gone.
Lethington A mirror, hasten! From her cap take out
That grouse's feather, which she blew upon,
And tucked into the velvet rim to please
Page Bastian who had found it. Bring it here.
Quick! A fair image, and some breath would soften
Its climate. Just a tremble on the plume,

The edge where down is lightest.
Moray Did you find
A strange behaviour in her at the castle?
Lethington He played to make her woman's sentiment
Dance soft attendance on him.
Moray And the lead
Was taken; she was gracious and reserved,
Stung and yet frightened. All this comes about
Through hardness to God's word. I scarce may speak
What I believe of her. Adultery. . . .
Lethington Preposterous conclusion! They have been
Indifferent and dissevered all the year;
What you have lately seen within her manner
Is but such stuff as turns all women poets
When sons of Adam bleed. The root of this
Her sickness is her sore fidelity
To that young fool who daily injures her
With taunts, neglect, and scandals. I have had
A sobbing confidence that so it is.
Moray And you believe her word? Then must you swallow
That she and David, closeted for hours,
Talked only correspondence, and the turns
Of language in her letters.
Lethington She had been
An idiot to have circumscribed discourse
To business, for her wit is fanciful,
And of familiar charm. We watch for hours,

And yet no stir. The noble creature shows
A fine persistency in life ; she seems
Like one assaulted traitorously, and struck
With evil from without.
Moray It will be safe
At last to make announcement of her death ;
Let the attendants come to lay her out,
And I meanwhile will straighten her.
Lethington Beware !
Still the firm knot of life secures her features,
In her expression there is unity ;
Have patience and observe.
Moray It is important
That you, her secretary, acquaint at once
The foreign courts with her decease, and further
With her entreaty that I take the rein
Of government.
Lethington That was a private prayer ;
I caught it not, a politic suggestion.
Her son ? She made a sisterly request
You would befriend the lad. . . . I take your cue ;
But should this be a catalepsy ?
Moray No,
Her sad physician prayed us not to hope
She could revive. The Lord has smitten her !
I am the queen's most near of kin, and stay
To render her my cold, fraternal duty.
Her face is rigid.

Lethington Death has signed no bond
About it; for more certainty, before
I spread your tidings, I will fetch her leech
To touch her and give verdict. *Exit*

Moray The man-child
Of James the Fifth! Through all these stubborn years
What waiting and what triviality,
Waiting with perfect faculties and power!
A male—and without blemish. Margaret, dear
My mother, soon thy contract shall be published,
And the Guise offspring illegitimate.
Stewards and lawful stewards!—I was born
A king of as deep royalty as Christ:
Now, Scotland, will I cast in thee such seeds
As in their crescence will transform the land!
The godly shall find refuge in the branches
Which now are tender slips. From the beginning
I knew that she must perish, as a lie
Betwixt God's thumb and finger must be crushed;
Therefore abode His pleasure. Though there seemed
A moment when by gentle intervention . . .
Heaven would not suffer the least spot to fall
Across my conscience. (*Going up to cupboard*) There is goodly plate
Within this cupboard, comfort that may swell
My English gold, and rings . . her stones will tempt
Elizabeth. If I can bribe her women!

Where are her pearls? This cloth can be applied
In gifts by which my precedence will shine.

(*The* QUEEN *wakes*)

Queen How far at ebb I feel, how deep withdrawn!
Some one is moving slowly on a stage;
Methinks if he should come and handle me,
And stretch me for my burial, I should watch
As a mere witness; yet there is a pain
Beneath this solstice, for I long to speak.
Come hither! Wherefore do you leave my side?
How long ago I made request to you
When I lay dying to hold fast my hand.
Rub me a little.

Moray Doth God give you speech?
Be not deceived, good sister, you are far
Beyond my ministry. Below they give
The order for your funeral.

Queen Is it so?
'Tis well! For, dearly as I love my life,
I am content to die, so excellent
Seems now God's every motion with my soul.
Poor watcher, do I trouble you?

Moray Prepare
To look upon your Judge. You must not lie
And smile as you were dying but in sport.

Queen. I am so weak; God gives me leave to enter
His kingdom softly as a little child.

There are no thrones, no sceptres. But my breath
Returns, not like a flicker, pressing deep
Up from my heart. If you would give me wine.
Moray I dare not.
Queen Would it overcloud my brain?
The dizziness returns; you are too fearful.
Go, summon Huntly, Bothwell, Lethington;
And fetch my women: death has granted me
A little grace to bid a last farewell. *Exit* MORAY
What love is in my heart! God finds the sole,
The royal use of love is clemency,
Remittance, pardon: it should be enough.

Re-enter MORAY *with* HUNTLY *and* LETHINGTON

There is a golden light before my eyes
That hinders me from seeing; pray for me,
I have short time to live.
Moray Then will we pray
You be delivered from idolatry.
Abjure your Popish errors.
Queen I will die
In my religion; 'tis the tempered way
To heaven—one cannot change one's habitude.
Let all men have free access to their God;
'Tis my desire for Protestants and those
Of my own faith, so sweet is liberty.
Put no enforcement on them.
Moray You forget

Straight is the narrow way.
Queen From east and west
They come who traverse it.
Moray I shall not fail
To rear the prince, your son, in sanctitude.
Queen Who keeps the child?—Your number is not full.
Where is the lord of Bothwell?
Lethington He is riding
Across the hills to see you.
Queen So I rode,
Through such a country as is that wherein
Our vague dreams are enacted: I grew dizzy;
And he has wounds.
Moray You do appoint me regent,
And guardian of your son?
Queen Plague me no more
To put my honours from me; you were ever
For abdication—I shall die a queen.
Huntly, the king has knowledge of my illness,
And yet forbears? Have you no kindly words
Of parting, James, my brother?
Moray I await
Your trust and testament.
Queen To live in peace
Is all the charge I lay on you. I heard
A footstep. Is it Henry come at last
To take my free forgiveness?

Enter BOTHWELL

Lethington He refuses
Stoutly to come; you must not look for him.

Queen I have a dying kiss I must deliver,
A message to him.

Moray Sister, give it me!

Queen Nay, you would poison it. When we were lovers—
Ah me, I hung on him as he lay sick—
You strove to part us.

Bothwell (*Aside*) Shall death ruin me
Before my very eyes, and turn my kingdom
To dust upon a bed? Prodigious loss!
Whom could I serve but her? How could I breathe,
My life's occasion gone, my forecast shrivelled,
My dower of fortune!

Queen Who will mind my babe?
None answer me——then let them fetch my servants.
(BOTHWELL *kneels, and takes her hand*)
What, Hepburn? Will you lift my pillow up?
So! let me lean on you.

Bothwell You are not wrapt
Warmly; your cheek is cold. (*To the* Lords) Bid Arnauld come.
(*To the* QUEEN) I swear you will recover. (*In a low voice*) Dare you die?
(*To the* Lords) The queen lacks tendance; I will be her leech,

Till she have finer aid; fetch me her women—
No moment to be lost. (*To the* QUEEN) Give me your lips
To damp with wine, and swear that you will live;
My queen, a token!

Enter the MARIES

Queen Girls, take care of me,
For if you keep me with you through this day
I shall not die. Be comforted, my earl.

ACT III

SCENE I—*Craigmillar; the* QUEEN, MARY SETON, *and* MARGARET CARWOOD, *walking together through the garden from the chapel*

Queen How sweet it is to breathe the air again,
Though blue November mists it. Winter roses
Blooming and fading! Mary, have you loved,
My silent girl?

Mary Seton I have but looked on love
As the moon looks on day-spring those rare nights
She sees a world her silver would make wan,
And creeps, recluse, into the western haze,
Full of unbosomed memories.

Queen And I . . . (*She sings*)

Ah, I, if I grew sweet to man,
It was but as a rose that can
No longer keep the sweet that heaves
And swells among its fluttering leaves.

The pressing fragrance would unclose
The flower, and I became a rose,
That, unimpeachable and fair,
Planted an odour in the air.

No art I used men's love to draw;
I lived but by my being's law,
As roses are by heaven designed
To bring the honey to the wind.

I found there is scant sun in spring;
I found the blast a riving thing;
And yet even ruined roses can
No other than be sweet to man.

Mary Seton Still faster tears! Why will you linger here,
So tall 'mid the low bushes?
Queen (*Stooping over the rose-bushes*) How I stood
On tip-toe, and with prickled hands drew down
The roses in the bower at Inchmahome!
We were so happy 'neath the filbert-trees
In the old, monkish garden.
Mary Seton I remember
The rows of boxwood hid us from each other;
You struggled to get out into the sun,
Transgressing the due limits.
Queen I was free
Those last few weeks before we went to France;
I could be naughty at my pleasure then,
The wrinkled faces smoothed to see my pranks,
And I had no correction. Let me wander
In reverie awhile.

Margaret Carwood Alas, dear madam,
We find you sad if you are solitary,
And weeping oft, as now.

Queen A common thing!
What is there for a woman who takes thought,
If once she look down on her lot, save tears,
Strong floods of silent weeping. Leave me, girls,
Leave me awhile.

Exeunt MARGARET CARWOOD *and* MARY SETON

It was for courtesy
I stooped and let Lord Bothwell kiss my hands,
For sweet to me is love in human eyes,
As daylight to the world. Through all my sickness
My husband did not come; I was recovered
When he at last made speed. He comes again
To-day; I should be happy, for my babe
Waits Holy Church's blessing. Yester eve
I held him in my arms, and heard my voice
Humming a cradle-song. Ah me, the tune—
Guilty again! It was the very same
My sweet French poet sang to bring the flush—
He called it flush o' France—to my white cheek
When we sailed north together. Memories
All, all of love! I am grown weak again,
And weep at the least thought. A robin trills
Each morning at my casement, on the yew,
And sets me sobbing; yet if now, even now,
My lord would lean a little 'gainst my knee,

Brushing his curls in the old, boyish way
Against my fondling heart, it were enough
To bring me back to kindness and desire.
When first I saw him, he was messenger
From Lady Lennox to my early dule:
That night at Orleans, as I sat alone
By lamplight, in the chill of widowhood,
That pierced as penetrative flakes of snow,
That bruise and then make stiff the pain, there bent
Before me my boy-cousin, lovely-faced,
Modest, and rose, with radiant, crested hair—
One would have said that Cupid's arching wings
Were met above his head; he was too young
For other speech than what his glistening eyes
Might give: with bashful worship he withdrew,
And I, the unsealed packet in my hand,
Took courage of the envoy. High of stature
Even then, and such full prince in him!—his portrait
Keeps its warm lodging in my breast; I doubt
If e'er I can displace it.

Enter DARNLEY *surrounded by a leash of sporting dogs*

Margaret back?

Henry!

Darnley (*Pointing at her with a drunken laugh*) How
wan a face, as thin and sallow
As if you you were a good wife in the wynds,

Suckling her puling bairn. I have left girls
With fresher cheeks than these.
Queen What brings you hither?
If to confess, the list of your offences
You may rehearse unchecked; though majesty,
When the offence is vile, deals chastisement
Without assize.
Darnley Ho, ho, my dame, and would
You care for my confession? You are proud,
And might not laugh to hear the songs we sing
At Ainslie's tavern: I could pipe you one
Would put you to the blush. But come, wife, come—
We wink at one another's slips. Be merry!
You must not show high stomach to a king.
Queen A king of what? O'er whom? Is it to seek
An unknown empire you put out to sea;
To wave your hand o'er despicable tribes,
Where tyrants bluster and are terrible?
A royal purpose! Sir, we are apprised
That you continue every day from evil
To worse: we therefore must combine to put
Your honours from you, that in lower place
You may but mingle with your mates, not carry
High names and dignities along with you.
Darnley You ask me as a private gentleman
To my cub's christening? You deceive yourself;
My spirit swells, and all magnificoes
Are chary of their smiles. Strange horrors haunt

Outside the wine-cup—Morton . . . someone's bones!
I drink for very life, and have no mind
To diddle at your shows.
Queen You cannot mean
You will be absent when at Feast of Kings
We offer and present our true-born heir.
So glorious a day! The noblest princes
Of Christendom, through their ambassadors,
Compass the font, the Pope himself desires
A nuncio should be sped; I have half-drained
My coffers in my joy: solemnities,
Full of such quick succession and surprise
As we shall now prepare, will keep their rank
And lustre uneclipsed in sovereign minds
When James shall be a man.
Darnley James!
Queen There have been
Great Scottish monarchs of the name. My father . . . .
Darnley There have been Scottish kings named
David too;
If David be your infant's father's name,
Let it be his.
Queen It grieves me to the heart
The child should bear your likeness. We must rear him
Wholly apart from you. Now quit my presence;
I came here for the fresher air.
Darnley Dum derra!
Mistress, you go your way, and I go mine;

The spinning world is big enough for two
To ding their crowns and make a holiday . . . .
Flowers at your bosom! Let me have a rose
To wag at jesters. 'Pon my word, your lips
Are set up coy, and I must have a kiss
For bravery and fellowship. Come, woman,
Are you a wife or maid to lift your shoulder
Between our mouths?

Queen Leave me.

Darnley Gug, gug!—and wherefore,
Until I have advantage? By St. Bride,
I'll play the truant. Bessie laughs to hear
How you fly out and spit. 'Tis tavern-talk
That you are mortal jealous. Sweet-heart, come;
We will not mope. *Exit, caressing one of his dogs.*

Queen He must be put away,
Fool, traitor, noxious reptile. What are these
Sharp swords about my heart? No issue thence
Of sighs and dolorous weeping; war and winter,
Numb wretchedness, and fierce, constricting hate
Huddle together. If I suddenly
Could die! Ah, would to God that I were dead!

I could wish to be dead!
Too quick with life were the tears I shed,
Too sweet for tears is the life I led;
And, ah, too lonesome my marriage-bed!
I could wish to be dead.

I could wish to be dead,
For just a word that rings in my head;
Too dear, too dear are the words he said,
They must never be remembered.
I could wish to be dead.

I could wish to be dead:
The wish to be loved is all mis-read,
And to love, one learns when one is wed,
Is to suffer bitter shame; instead
I could wish to be dead.

And yet death were too narrow!

Enter LETHINGTON, BOTHWELL, *and* MORAY

Lethington,
I must return to France.
Lethington Slip from your sphere!
Not so, my lady Venus; we will chase
The noisome meteor from the firmament,
And, spell-bound, guard our passion for the stars.
While you, matutinal in piety,
Shunned not the perils of the autumn air,
Your servants not less zealous in your service
Than you in that of heaven, combined in close,
Determined counsel. Will you let us speak
Touching your husband?
Queen 'Tis a heart-break to me
To think he is my husband.

Lethington Cast not forth
Such strong, deep sighs. They sigh who wail the dead;
Not those who have sharp matter of reproach
Against the living. Justice, madam, whets
Her sword.

Queen Could I indeed be rid of him,
It were a dearer cleansing than from sin,
More liberating than to cast away
Mortality, more blessed than to rise
From misconception of disordered dream.
But if it cannot be . . . .

Bothwell What easier aim!

Queen Without dishonour to my son?

Bothwell Ay, surely;
My father was divorced, yet I enjoy,
Unblamed, his heritage.

Queen (*To* MORAY) James, you are silent;
Your mind misgives?

Lethington But if his godliness,
Being a little staggered by our zeal,
Appear unready, 'tis the wont of such:
The man accustomed to the leisure ways
Of Providence is apt to take offence
At the trim worldling's nimble diligence.

Bothwell (*Standing close behind the* QUEEN) Cannot
you banish him? You know the means
Of making the slow hours pass wearily
To those that have offended you.

Queen O earl,
I banish to recall.
Bothwell The chancellor
Should now be back in favour. (*Apart*) God, I stumble,
And blurt I know not what.
Moray An apt appeal;
With Morton here, we may, by the approval
Of Parliament, draw judgment on the head
Of the offender who hath twice detained
Your grace in ward unlawfully.
Lethington True, true!
(*Aside to* MORAY) We must be patient. Take a turn
with me
Across the tilt-yard, ere her mood be ripe
To pledge us Morton's pardon. *They pace together.*
Queen (*To* BOTHWELL) Hepburn, still
My cry is for a convent, where one feels
The pleasantness of death, and every day
Lives with him as a gentle monitor.
I long to be alone, for there is sorrow
One cannot put into one's prayers, nor drop
In any human breast—half recollection,
And half despair. My injuries are not
For state-reform. It is a sulphur-wind
About my modesty to hear of men
Counting my wrongs, of arid Protestants
Meting the measure of the chastisement
That cannot be poured out. When love is wronged

Hell opens at his feet; he must have space
Uncircumscribed, another infinite,
To map out his remorse.
Bothwell (*Aside*) What would she do?
She shakes me and incites.—How should it profit
You should retire to France?
Queen To mitigate
The shame of ruling with a vacant seat
Beside me, single, an unwidowed queen;
To yield to Fate, and, lying in her breath
Under her pressing bosom, to receive
Strange aliments and help. You do not speak . . . .
Bothwell I dare not.
Queen Does it look so ill in me
To crave for respite?
(*Turning, she catches the expression on his face and rises quickly*)
Hush, I will not urge
Too vehement a prayer for liberty;
There may be other means.
(LETHINGTON *and* MORAY *approach*) Is Morton lodged
With so scant comfort you would have him back
At once to his fat lands and revenues?
Lethington Nay, madam, persons of your noble nature
Should think him amply punished; he has scarce
A hole to put his head into, a penny
To buy a dinner.

Queen (*Wearily and half apart*) There is none of them
Guilty of venial error.
Lethington He will give
Wise counsel in this question of divorce;
He is an able lawyer, and hath much
Old rancour to repay.
Queen Beseech you speak
No more to me of this. Can you not see
That we are sundered? 'Tis enough; henceforth
No mention of my husband; he is dead,
Cast from our royal mind and purposes,
Forgotten, insignificant.
Moray To-morrow
We will remove to Holyrood.
Queen Oh, why?
Moray It is your birthday.
Queen If these feasts were kept,
And not wide, hollow gaps within the year,
We should to-day be merry; for the king—
Ye put it in my mind—is twenty-one.
I gave him no good wishes; but my tears
Are all for his amendment; he is young.
I will within, and write to him. God heals
Though he is slow in healing. Moray, come.
Exeunt QUEEN *and* MORAY, *followed by* LETHINGTON
Bothwell She stings me now to demon-jealousy
With shifts and cunning—yet she dropt a word . . . .
I hear the muster for some vast success

Rise through my nature, arming as a tract
Arms when the bale-fires hang upon the peels
By Tarras and by Tweed. My energies
Are wild and undirected, but aglow
With concourse and with hope. This husband, this
Mere cog upon the golden wheel of Fate
That would fly round to seat me on a throne,
And give me lips the loveliest that the world
Has decked for kisses and co-equal joys—
This Darnley shall be put away.

Re-enter LETHINGTON, *a bond in his hand, meeting* MARY FLEMING

How,—when,
I cannot bring to thought; but the great moment
That shatters him will feed my pulse with richness,
An impetus of blood. *Exit*

Lethington Well, Mary, well!
(*Looking after* BOTHWELL) He must be cooler when I bid him sign;
Among us we will guide the matter through,
And keep the queen in languid innocence
Since she will hear no question of divorce.

Mary Fleming Your brows are clouded.

Lethington Scruples, dear, scruples! There can be no clear-cut action in the world with this hesitancy at wrist.

Mary Fleming One cannot know surely by divination whether an action be right or wrong.

Lethington One may know by intuition whether a deed will profit. Do you not grieve for your mistress?

Mary Fleming Why, she is most marvellously beloved!

Lethington Well parried, young stateswoman, and of whom?

Mary Fleming Of all but her enemies—and these are the religious.

Lethington Who have scruples, so we return to our controversy; and scruples but cause men to do ill what they do; they cannot hinder ill-doing. Mary, why did you scruple to let me kiss you in the passage?

Mary Fleming Why, the queen was looking.

Lethington Looked she ever ill on lovers? I would have bussed you bonnily under her very eyes: they are russet now as a November twilight. I would fain enlighten them. Our great queen must be concerned with love—'tis her empire. Like the daughter of Jove she can forget her own grief in the joys of an amorous couple. We have need to divert her. Come, come; 'tis my hour of recreation. I have been plotting the deaths of princes; but I have caught wind of the abominable machinations of Dan Cupid for my wedding, and I must look into this conspiracy. Have you harboured any of these infamous malefactors?

Mary Fleming My lord, most sorely against my will . . .

Lethington Ah, you had scruples, but yet a maiden's delicate prompting to give protection to fugitives.

Mary Fleming A troop indeed of vagabond wishes so tender . . .

Lethington Of age, you thought no-one would have the heart to arrest them. They shall not be arrested. Confide this innocent troop to my keeping. They confess under torture to devising a plot for the possession of my person.

Mary Fleming I swear that they meant you no ill.

Lethington No ill—but a remedy for all ills—my death, which is rapidly approaching on the strides of frenzy. I am lunatic every instant of my leisure, and stark mad in my despatches. I must needs prate to Cecil of your kindness. You have put a wonderful elation into my nature. But as secretary, I am undone. Now (*Drawing her to him*) swear to me, a woman's sweet, silent way, swear that you will recover me. What—refuse the sweet lip-promise? 'tis the only oath I take of a woman.

Mary Fleming Yet I will not make it on compulsion.

Lethington Lest you might break it without remorse. O subtle casuistry! Kiss me once free-heartedly, and take these winter-roses in your cheeks to the queen.

Mary Fleming Carnation is the Stuart flower.

Lethington (*Taking her cheeks between his hands and kissing them*) Then your own by inheritance and fortune.

SCENE II—*Stirling;* BOTHWELL'S *private lodging.* LADY BOTHWELL *is seated reading. In a corner of the room* PARIS *is folding up rich suits of clothing*

Lady Bothwell Ay, Paris, clear
Away the litter.
Paris Madam, but my lord
Looked brave in his blue doublet. 'Twas the queen
Made choice of it.
Lady Bothwell The show is over now,
The prince baptised a Catholic. Be careful,
Nor let the moths consume that Spanish fur—
Lay spices with it.
Paris (*Holding up a rich garment*) This is gaudier stuff:
If the dim, violet stitches were not blurred
On this gold ground, my lord, I warrant me,
Would not disdain to wear it at the court.
They say 'tis Flemish work.
Lady Bothwell Peace, peace, I wander
From my good book—*Legenda Aurea*, this
My warning comfort through these vanities.
The sight of such fair clothing will recall
The day of my own marriage, when the queen
Herself attired me, sprinkling me with jewels
Of her own gift. 'Tis scarce a year ago.

Enter BOTHWELL

Bothwell Jane, have you heard the latest stir at court?
The good archbishop of St. Andrews, he
Who gave us dispensation from the Pope
Is now restored to power. . . . You have not kept
Too carefully that paper? If 'tis lost
The archbishop could divorce us on the ground
We are too near of blood.
Lady Bothwell There is grave reason,
Ay, graver cause than consanguinity,
Why we should separate. Your lewd behaviour . . . .
Bothwell True, Jane, my conduct does deserve reproach,
And from a wife so saint-like.—Sue me, sue me;
Give me no mercy. I confess my guilt.
Lady Bothwell But wherefore do you seek this separation?
I know your passion for the queen—alack!
I would not be the bar to your ambition;
But she has still a husband of her own,
Jealous, intractable, imperious.
Add not unto her griefs; her enemies
Have well-nigh overwhelmed her.
Bothwell Darnley lies
Sick of small-pox at Glasgow, and the queen
Ere March may be a widow.

Lady Bothwell Then heaven looks
With pity on my sovereign.
Bothwell It is shame
To wrong a wife so gentle.
Lady Bothwell I will lay
The dispensation where by no man's hand
It ever can be found. Thus honourably
We can be parted; and, in honour, you,
After such time as heaven has loosed her bond,
Can take the queen.
Bothwell It is a desperate scheme!
How cold and yet how kindly are your eyes.
I never hate you—her I often hate.
Lady Bothwell Poor lady, for you love her! I have been
More fortunate in winning your respect.
You are a gallant fellow, but too wild
For the great, fireside virtues. It is true,
Despite the dispensation, we have never
Been man and wife.
Bothwell You have befriended me
Unfailingly. Jane, you are deep within
The counsels of the queen.—Does she incline:
May I not hope to win her?
Lady Bothwell For her sake
I am unknitting, James, our marriage-bond;
I shall not then report her. At your feet
The gown of Spanish fur I recognise

As her own mother's wear. She loved her mother
She would not part with that except to one
She trusted with a child's simplicity.
Prove worthy of her faith.
Bothwell She is capricious,
Lenient, remorseful, in a breath. To-night
With sudden pity for her ailing lord
She starts for Callander.
Lady Bothwell A faithful heart.
James, of your loyalty they make great boast;
It is not of my fibre who for her
Resign my rank and office as a wife.
Bothwell When I am king . . . .
Lady Bothwell I shall be still her subject,
My blessèd lady. Men would die for her—
They say so. I, simply to smooth a crease
Of her wide brows, would suffer any shame
The good archbishop, or indeed yourself
Could put me to. Let Huntly settle this
Without my further meddling. I shall stay
Awhile from town. You have a heavy stare
And discontented: all is as you wish?
Bothwell Have you no pain in leaving me?
Lady Bothwell No pain
In serving my dear mistress. Fare you well.
I cannot yet divorce you from my prayers—
You have few friends. I will depart this even,
The writing on my person: 'twill be easy

Hereafter to approve our marriage null.
Farewell! God's blessing on you. *Exit*
Bothwell Fie, this woman
Leaves me with branded cheeks. To bid her pack;
To break up house, to get myself divorced
From one so noble and so tolerant
Just for a giddy hope! (*Summoning* PARIS) Ho,
Paris, put
This trumpery away (*Kicking the Spanish fur*). I must
to-morrow
Betimes conduct the queen to Callander. *Exit* PARIS
The infamous, soft creature with her sighs,
Her innocence and wonder!—she shall be
A glorious fellow-sinner at my side,
Shall give me love for love. I am no fool;
I know we stand together on the brink
Of uttermost perdition; but some joy
She owes me. Why, a fiend to whom one sells
One's soul gives earthly pleasure to excess
In recompense, and I have simply signed
A bond to be a denizen of hell
For ever, for her sake. We will be platted
Together, as the rose is with the briar
O'er some fond lovers' tombs. How low the fire
Has sunk! I am left stranded, with no comfort,
Divorced and homeless,—till a palace-door
Open, until I have that other wife
Spotted with furs and gems; it turns my brain.

SCENE III—*Whittingham; beneath the aged yew-tree;* LETHINGTON *is discovered, leaning on one of the scaly, red boughs*

Lethington Ay, you big snow-clouds, pile your virulence
Over the swarthy yew-tree. Let the white
Be blackened, and the sooty swathed in snow;
'Tis the world's process of transfiguration,
And thwarted issues. I am dolorous, sick,
And savage, a pined bridegroom—married but
On Twelfth Night, Feast of the Epiphany,
And thrust from my sweet bride ere she had learnt
Half the infinitude of that affection
Reserved for conjugal unbosoming.
I told my pretty lass I would create
And then receive her happiness; 'tis plain
Of all the parts of man I am most fitted
To play the bridegroom: the slow dalliance suits
The quietness of my nature; and to win
My ends by love and sheer persistency
Is to give favouring exit to the grace,
The living fount within, that I attempt
Vainly to dam. There is no brute in me;
This Bothwell must contrive the bloody work
Of which the apprehension turns me sick.
I must acquaint my love of my bruised rest,
My terrors and imaginings. (*Jotting down a note*)

Sweet Mary,

The omens are not auspicious. I fear thy bridegroom will come to an ill end. For last night in a dream I encountered, as it were, a mangled funeral. I saw the tressels and the staves, the peacock and the dog. The peacock would not look at me; but the dog paused as before some decayed matter. Dear, in my anguish at his snuffling, I struggled so violently that the vision broke. 'Tis the cradle of your warm breast that I lack. You alone can rescue me from these ill dreams. Yours, to deliver from the dogs,

LETHINGTON.

To my breast, and to mingle there with much foul matter. How now! Yonder is Morton, parting with the castellan, a sunny bluster on his brow.

Enter MORTON

My lord, you have a rosy face.

Morton I have slept well in this air; it is my own.

Lethington You mean your native air?

Morton Mine, man, as the fish are in yonder stream. It fans my harvests: shall I own the wheatfields and not the breeze that bows them? It carries my feeding rains into the valley; it sweeps my hills.

Lethington 'Twas the queen's bounty gave you Whittingham.

Morton The queen gave it; she shall by no means

take it back again with her other bounties when she reaches her twenty-fifth year. I enjoy a goodly heritage. When my paths drop fatness, I take it as a sign I am one of God's elect; a man with a lean patrimony is but a browsing goat. I feed among the green pastures: that reminds me whose I am. I have been lying fallow in the south; but, Maitland, my blank ground is not unsown; it bosoms a young crop. Ah, ah, my vengeance is lusty in me.

Lethington But you must not blink
With such an eager eye. This death-chill morning,
And the grim velvets of the yew forebode:—
Cheerless for conference; yet a colloquy
I' the open air is safer than within.
I have myself made search beneath the shadow
Of the dark flats and found all tenantless.

Morton But hold! where's Moray; he is one of us?

Lethington Escaped from troubles, as the dove that fled
The ark when beasts grew quarrelsome within;
He will return anon, the twig of peace
And innocency in his mouth: meanwhile
I am enforced to break my honeymoon.
My marriage-morning when our sovereign bowered
My lady in the veil, a messenger
Brought word of the king's sickness; of a sudden
She softened, breaking as a wintry cloud
To prophecy of April.

Morton There was rumour
Moray had tried with fireworks at the feast
Of the ambassadors . . .
Lethington To take him off
By powder, and it failed. You see yon track
Of frosty breath? (*Pointing to* BOTHWELL *riding swiftly*)
It is our task to order,
Being circumspect, the footsteps of a fool,
To steer leviathan,
And regulate the plunges of the whale.
Moray is cautious; yonder is a man
Who will confound a murder with a brawl.
I leave you to give ear to his proposals;
I can but nurture, others must conceive.
(*Peering at* BOTHWELL *through the boughs as he approaches*)
I could pray—*pray*—in my detestation of him, and I am at my very worst when I conceive a mind for prayer. 'Tis a summoning of the legions of angels the Holiest abjured. Yet to find incontinent a wish full in one's heart, a firm desire! I will give it shape: *Heaven blast him!* So, it is articulate, whizzed out into the air.

Exit

Enter BOTHWELL

Morton This is mad riding in the frost—you steam.
Bothwell The man is sick; it baffles me. God's blood,

She left me on her way to him—I travel
I know not whither; there is nought to do.
Morton But for our present purpose, if the lad
Be like to die . . .
Bothwell She will recover him;
I tell you she can lift up from the grave,
Just stooping o'er one.
Morton Well, if he recruit . . .
Bothwell One cannot stick one's hanger in a man
That's sick and dribbling. Were there but a field
To win, a universe to harry—not
This puling voice to stop!
Morton Come, come! The deed,
Though it seem paltry, may have fine effect.
You would be king, and shall be, as reward
For my good pardon purchased by your love.
Compress yourself to rationality!
You have the queen's own hand-writ?
Bothwell God, her great,
Committing glances. She pours forth the truth
Fast as the sun his arrows. Bless the lass!
For I would trail a pike to the world's end
For love of her.

Re-enter LETHINGTON

Lethington (*To* BOTHWELL) Good morrow, earl.
Morton (*To* LETHINGTON) You come

With business on your face, and in your hand . . .
Lethington A doubting, anxious letter from the queen;
Her lord is mending and needs change of air,
How say you, shall he lie at Kirk o' Fields,
Since he mislikes Craigmillar? 'Tis a site
Not much frequented, pleasant for the sick.
Morton Has Balfour offered it?
Lethington With free access
To all our company.
Bothwell This Kirk o' Fields,
You say . . . I care not, so she carry him,
Stretched on a litter, to the wilderness.
Lethington But for the manner of the action?
Morton Pick
A quarrel with him, end him in a brawl.
Bothwell I will not touch the leper.
Lethington Tempt him out
Into the country on a sunny day,
And let the maskers wait upon his steps.
Bothwell Let the earth swallow him! I do not need
That you should lean your brows upon your arm
To pencil me my plan. Some accident,
Some loosening of the walls—for we can dig
And burrow if the tenement be ours—
Shall raise him up a mound: we will provide
His burial; ask no question of his death!
I will not face a tremulous, sick man.

I am too superstitious.

Morton Lethington,
This lusty loyalist will be found a bridegroom
After our princess' heart.

Bothwell (*Fiercely, to* LETHINGTON) Discredit me,
Speak low to Cecil of my impudence,
Hint to Elizabeth of my ambition
To give her unblessed, sterile throne an heir. . . .

Morton (*Quickly drawing* BOTHWELL *away*) What matter! Woo the woman afterward—
Will they or nill they, in the end 'tis one.
But look you, Bothwell, I am now at ease
On my estates, and a hoarse gratitude
To her who has re-seated me prevents
My open share in your conspiracy,
Unsanctioned by her warrant. Tell me now,
You who are high in favour, how the cause
Hath been advanced.

Bothwell The true Evangel! Why,
The prince, you know, was christened Catholic,
And the queen wasted tears entreating me
To hold the grease, the candle, and the salt.
I will protest till she be Protestant;
She shows faint opposition when I rave,
A melting coldness.

Morton The ambassadors
Marked how she put you in the foremost rank.

Bothwell Until she went to Glasgow. Now, I swear

She dotes on his infectious malady.

(*They pass out, talking*)

Lethington To widow her! Does my policy involve a marriage? There is a certain dunness about my heart that disarms: I was witness of that hand-fasting at Hermitage—and there is a kind that goeth not out save by marriage; in peculiar, female cases espousal is a process of exorcism. Whew, whew! What a vast desire I have to whistle, to confide my shrewdness to the wind.

Re-enter MORTON

Morton Heigh-ho! Where have your wits been? Kill a husband, and not be hot upon his wife! Do you think I have listened to English gossip for nothing? 'Tis in all people's mouths that Bothwell was king-consort at the christening. He will get this hand-writ.

Lethington He will not. Unfold further.

Morton He shall rise to his ruin step by step; we exalt him to a scaffold. Ere a twelve-month, I tell you, we shall have the government in the hands of men, foes of Papistry and friends of England. Come, Mr. Secretary, is not this the mark you shot at from the first? What has blanched you, man? 'Tis this damned, still air. Into the house! Let us eat and drink. (*Standing by* LETHINGTON, *and watching* BOTHWELL *riding across the plain.*) Does his ambition vex you? He fares forth under the scowl of heaven, though he canter to his

bridal. (*Walking away, and looking back at* LETHINGTON) So, he will see him into the wood. *Exit*

Lethington How I dislike the supernatural! How my appeal to it shames me! For to clamour there must be instant largesse. Fate accomplishes because she is deaf. *Exit*

SCENE IV—*The Garden of Kirk o' Fields; night, with moon and stars. The* QUEEN *and* MARGARET CARWOOD.

Queen Out to the stars, to the keen, midnight air,
To cold, to purity! Margaret, my girl,
These are gay, tuneful worlds above our head;
One cannot hear their voices, 'tis too far,
But they are singing blithe. This pretty group
Of sisters in a knot, just seven—and Mars,
That burns so at the heart! Ye festal heavens,
I would be with you in your revelry.

Margaret Lady, to me the stars are fixed and silent;
I do not judge your way.

Queen They reel and spin,
Attract and spread repulsion.

Margaret Recollect
To-morrow night you spend at Holyrood,
Howe'er the king constrain you.

Queen Ay, to dance,

To eddy through the air! I have been watching
Two hours with restless limbs beside his bed:
He slept, but held, importunate, my hand
In his hot grasp. . . . I lay awhile unstirred,
And must have dreamed, for it grew wonderful,
Untramelled, soft; and Ronsard sang to me—
You know the chanson?—

La Lune eſt couſtumiere
De naiſtre tous les mois,
Mais quand noſtre lumiere
Eſt eſteinte vne fois,
Longuement ſans veiller
Il nous faut ſommeiller.

Tandis que viuons ores,
Vn baiſer donnez-moy. . . .

Enter to the back, unseen, BOTHWELL *and* PARIS

Margaret Hush, lady, it is shame to face the heaven,
Singing of love.
Queen It breaks the loneliness.
Donnez-m'en mille encores,
Amour n'a point de loy:
Enchanting music! Suddenly it jarred.
I was beside my husband.
Margaret Such a sigh!
Can it be good to marry?

Queen Excellent,
You backward girl!
A ſa Diuinité
Conuient l'infinité.
(*Perceiving* PARIS) Jesu, how black a sight!
Comes Paris as a masquer from my lord?
Sooty as hell! How now, Sir Demon? we
Would hold discourse with you. *Exit* PARIS
He is ashamed,
And slinks into the shade. What is it, dear?
Some triumph for your wedding, some device,
And mocking entertainment? There has been
Much whispering of late about the stairs.
Margaret Fie, fie, it frightens.
Bothwell (*Apart*) Does she rouse me up
To batten on her beauty? The response
To that frank singing toward the clouds is *here.*
She shall caress me. I will trouble her,
Until she fade and famish in desire.
Queen *Tandis que viuons ores,*
Vn baiſer donnez-moy,
I must instruct thee
With what cold spells and sudden condescensions
To keep Sebastian doting. Let us walk.
(*Passing with* MARGARET)
Bothwell (*Apart*) It is all art and demonology;
While fresh from out hell's smithy, for her sake
I bid the devils colour my design,

She wraps heaven's cloak about her, and becomes
The firmer in her blameless sovereignty
As she more guiltily incites. I hate her,
And curse this slovenly and raw intent,
This floundering pause, when free audacity
Would bring our lips to meeting in a trice.
Pass by, my lady Lucifer! Again,
The amorous, icy voice!

Queen (*Re-passing*) *La langue chantereſſe*
De voſtre nom aimé . . .

Margaret Madam, you draw
Too near the windows.

Queen With a wifely chaunt,
A soft, assailing ode? Give me my freedom,
My fancies for an hour. Who looks on us?
Earl, you are closely wrapped.

Bothwell (*To* MARGARET) Your bridegroom, lass,
Were jealous did he find you thus entwined.
Give place; I would be private with the queen.

Exit MARGARET CARWOOD

Queen (*Faintly*) It is the stars . . . .

Bothwell Right, right; 'Tis destiny,
Plotting above our heads. You note that sign?

Queen A flaming comet?

Bothwell The round crystal yonder
Dropt from her sphere.

Queen Astronomy and science
Upon your tongue, my lord?

Bothwell If you have learning,
Your liegeman boasts some magic.
Queen (*Apart*) Is he drunk?
Nay, or he would not move me to this tremor,
And sense of the chill dew.—A lamp above
Is being shifted; I must hasten in.
Conduct me. . . . Is this rudeness that you stand?
Some memory folds you? Perhaps at Hermitage
You have seen all these stars in a great sky,
Like a dark moorland heaving overhead,
That not a roof or tower has civilised.
Bothwell *Amour n'a point de loy:*
That polished Ronsard! 'Tis incredible
He never dwelt 'mid screeching heather-wilds.
Queen Ah, the gray grasses and the sudden bogs,
The wind that is a lonely trumpeter,
Blowing in triumph over loneliness!
Believe me that I envy your abode
Among the dales and breezes.
Bothwell When you came
To Hermitage . . . .
Queen I could not stay my horse;
We felt the pressure of our liberty
In maddening speed.
Bothwell For swifter entertainment
Take ship on northern seas. By God, my life
Has had its share of rough distress and danger
Since first I went an exile from your realm:

Prison, and storm, and enemies.
Queen At last
Your sovereign's love and trust.
Bothwell Your hand as pledge.
(*Apart*) Her flesh is beryl in the moonshine.
Queen Yonder
There is a plot beneath the ash-tree, both
The ground and tree are whitened: there I'll tarry,
And hear of some adventure on the moor
Or sea-wave that befell you. I am caught
With longing for romance and vagrancy,
My nurse's cares have been so close and long.
I would I were a gipsy-queen to-night,
And from the brushwood looked upon the stars,
A rover such as they. I love to breathe
The ominous delight of these late hours;
With you they are familiar. . . . To my mind
You ever seemed the hero of some book
Of long-lost chivalry. Perchance I vex you;
My mood is wild, but careful of offence.
Pardon my dream.
Bothwell Speak on, speak on!
Queen Well, listen!
I thought I was to listen, but it seems
My frowardness is wordy. As to dwellings:
Crichton and Bothwell, Hermitage, Dunbar!
The very names might well seduce to deeds
Of formidable import; then, for change,

Your journeys through the foam,—your loyal service
Against outlandish brigands. . . . Is your wrist,
Fierce Elliot broke, recovered?
Bothwell Merely tender
When I most need its sinews.
Queen Still to babble—
Now of yourself: you have a gait and face
On which your occupations and your courage
Are faithfully imprinted; I have seen
A rock, thus obstinate, respond to weather,
Its force and circumstance identified,
Tho' opposites.
Bothwell Say more.
Queen When I have proved you
A knight, an old-world champion by my praises,
A man, while courts lack manhood?
Bothwell This free evening
Is worth all years of my unfriended course.
My queen.
Queen You crush my hand. . . . This starry sky
Becomes almost unreal in the intense
Stillness as I look up—the liquid spaces
Between the stars, the liquid, twinkling stars!
Let us go in. Those heights are tremulous,
Faint to my eyes. It must be weariness,
Or over-draughts of the full tide of air
That flows up with the shadows.
Bothwell As I live

You shall not leave me yet, you cannot leave,
Enchanted by dark things.
Queen (*Apart*) He speaks the truth.
An irritation dances in my frame
That not a single woman of my troop
Should rescue me, and yet these long-drawn moments,
So quenchless and impossible, are sweet
As wonders when they happen. (*Aloud*) You must talk;
It is your turn, sir knight,—some rash adventure,
Swift peril!
Bothwell When I fled your anger last,
My ship drove in on Lindisfarne. . . . To-night
I have no memory; a fire of joy
Casts smoke across old doings. Look at me,
Not with those anxious, distant, queenly glances,
Coming and going like the shooting stars;
Give me the common, chestnut-coloured eyes
You bend on Melvil, full of confidence,
Serene and fearless. If you are beset
By hypocrites and traitors, so am I;
Misjudged, ill-favoured. Speak in this clear air;
Speak to me—you were better.
Queen More than once
I have been forced to banish you. Ah, then
It seems to me you had more happiness
Than now I set you midmost of these false,
Insurgent subjects. If I could escape,
If I might leave my kingdom!

Bothwell That great fortress
You gave me, that impregnable Dunbar,
Shall yield before I suffer you again
To put the sea betwixt us.
Queen 'Twas my mother . . . .
Bothwell Made me the guardian of your unworn crown;
Shall I not shield it now this golden hair
Twines up and down the gems? It is this head,
This living head I love.

Re-enter MARGARET CARWOOD

Margaret Madam, your husband
Complains he is deserted, and with bitter
Persistence craves your company.
Bothwell The queen
Is worn with watching and has need of air;
I will replace her. *Exit* MARGARET CARWOOD
Though I am no poet,
I joy to leave you compassed by the stars,
Lone on the grass that shines. Breathe freely, setting
The reckless chansons to some border-tune.
I will be faithful in my vigilance,
Till the night-watch.
Queen When I return. My lord,
I were content upon an ocean-vessel
To be adrift wherever fate might carry,

Or whither Pleiads guided. Fare you well!
(*They part*) A mad farewell!
Bothwell (*Singing at a distance*)
Amour n'a point de loy. *Exit*
Queen My stateliness falls off; so natural
It seems to hear the man's love in his voice,
No more than the inevitable youth
In the least movement of his lip and eye.
I think that he was born to be my servant,
And could I treat him with more confidence,
He would not be forgetful of his place.
The fault is mine; I tremble at his coming,
I who have been his merry mate in war,
And borne his soldier's praise without a blush
In full sight of my army. 'Tis my weakness!
I never shall grow holy among men,
And yet I wish them ever good, not evil,
And long to give them pleasure of such portion
Of wit or beauty as were made my dower.
My father sighed to hear I was a lass,
And felt the land was doomed. There is a kingdom
Meet for a woman's rule: Ave Maria,
At thy Son's feet, on heaven's gold-burnished floor,
How placidly thou kneelest for thy crown
Of stars. O love!

A sa diuinité
Conuient l'infinité.

SCENE V—*Kirk o' Fields; the next night; the* KING'S *room. The* QUEEN *and* DARNLEY; *nobles playing cards at a distance*

Darnley Why should you leave me?
Queen I have told you, dear;
To trip a dance for Hymen's sake, and carry
Bride Margaret to the bride-bed.
Darnley I remember . . .
Queen Ah, so do I—such pretty, blessèd hours,
When you were Cupid's lofty bachelor,
And I the captive queen he led in triumph.
Now do not darken, for the shorn-off curls
Will soon be up again, and soon your cheeks
Will catch the tint that fled them.
Darnley I am clear,
I almost think, of blemish; in the glass
There showed but few ill-marks. You must not watch me.
I am so livid yet.
Queen Come, come, this shame
And coyness are of health; for ever springtide
Is set on brave appearance.
Darnley I have reason
To covet in your face the lovely wholeness
Of your complexion; we were once a pair
Of world-unequalled persons.

Queen Foolish boy,
A few more patient days will mate our looks,
Since hearts are come together.
Darnley Let me hold
Your sloping fingers still; I feel secure
Only when you are close.
Queen So apprehensive
At Robert Stuart's tale! Alas, you know
How meddlesome he is, and though he told you
Of danger, when I questioned him, he looked
Hot with his lying, and denied expressly
All he had spoken.
Darnley Bastard! With low mouth
He dared to give the lie to me; my sword
Will be a restless weapon at my side
Till it drink satisfaction.
Queen (*Apart*) O the future!
My soul aches when I span his convalescence,
And see him in the violent world again;
Intolerable change!—I have your promise
You will be gentle in your government,
Since God has shown you mercy.
Darnley Do you doubt me?
My princess, I have almost died; disease
Has made my old life ashes, and implanted
A new life that's a yearning—when you bend
Above me, then I know it is for you,
To please you, win your smiles that like the sun

Take lonesomeness away. O Marie, Marie,
I have been such an outcast, I who have
Youth's social sting in every pulse, whose actions
Must need have eyes upon them to commend
The doing . . .

Queen Hush, we will not look afar
From this kind present, or if memory struggle
To bear her part in loving, let her bring,
As in a rosy basket, all the flowers
She swept up from our nuptials.

Darnley Do not laugh,
My Mary—but the poet you awaken
In every man who sights you, made me turn
Some stanzas in your praise . . about the turtle,
And how she cannot weary for her mate
More than I do for you who keep my heart,

> *" My heart which shall be sure*
> *With service to the deed*
> *Unto that lady pure,*
> *The weal of womanhood."*

Your tears!

Queen It is such piteous exultation
If I can please you, Henry, that it brims
A little at my eyes.

Darnley You must not weep,
Lest they should say we quarrel. Let me fling

A rainbow-laugh amid these showers. By Venus,
I'll tell you how I closed my monody.

> "*Yet no mirth till we meet,*
> *Shall cause me be content,*
> *But still my heart lament*
> *In sorrowful sighing sore,*
> *Till that time she's present*
> *Farewell, I say no more,*
> *Quoth King Henry Stuart.*"

When, pat!—I signed my name, they brought my meal,
And I was doggish-weary, half-asleep.
Is it not comic? I am bound to laugh,
As you are, at the wantonness—ha, ha!

Queen You have not been so merry a long while;
'Tis true that youth is joy, or is not youth!
I see my handsome bridegroom once again,
Now that the round lips chuckle.

Enter BOTHWELL

Ah, my lord,
You find me a transgressor of my promise,
Sworn out of love to lovers. Shall I slip
Sebastian's revel? I would rather break
Engagement with an envoy.

Bothwell Lighted torches
Await you on the steps; there yet is time
To entertain an hour at Holyrood.

Darnley But do not go!
Bothwell (*Apart*) My God, what din they make
Below us—fools! I must suppress their noise.
(*To the* QUEEN) Not go! The couple would forswear
your service
After such sharp rebuff.
Queen Your honest blame
Stirs me to blush and hasten. (*Kissing* DARNLEY)
Bothwell (*Apart*) Curse her favours!
She yields him those surpassing lips that have
Envasseled me, at distance from their breath;
But yet she does not tremble: it is I
Who give her body laws. *Exit*
Queen What cruel fate
That kisses, though they lock a treasured hour,
Must afterwards unlock it! Loose my hand,
Dear boy.
Darnley O Mary, it is very strong,
This beautiful, close hand, at which my life
Drags for its safety. I must shut my eyes,
And dash into my ruin if I loose . . .
My heart bounds in affrightment.
Queen I will come
With early morrow; but for surer help
And comfort take this ring of bright-eyed stones,
Which I have warmed with use, and happily
Turn you to slumber, while this Argus tarries
To keep my watch about you. One last kiss!

Darnley Your mouth revives me!

Enter BOTHWELL

Queen (*To* BOTHWELL) To the marriage! Come.

Exeunt the QUEEN *and* BOTHWELL: *the nobles rise up and follow them as a train*

Darnley 'Tis very lonely; the year-long alarm
That has been madness to my forward youth,
Driving its sap and fervour into violence
Of desperation, seizes me to-night.
I fly from my own body like a wild
And shivering horse that leaves the vehicle,
From which it broke, behind it on a road,
While it careers through distance. She alone,
My wife and queen, can hold this passion's head,
And keep me still.

Enter DARNLEY'S *page*, TAYLOR

In mounting have you heard
A small and careful noise?

Page 'Tis strange—there is
No wind, and yet a windiness of sounds.
I feel as when my mother told me tales
Of murderers or of goblins o' the mine:
Our house and all the pantries, as she sang,
Grew restless to my listening ears, until
I went to bed and slept.

Darnley Then let us go;

Shake up the pillows, Taylor. Why, the queen
Is moving through the glitter of a dance
Scarcely a half-mile off us. I believe
We both are childish, thinking of the fields
That lie beyond the garden. Let us sleep.
(*They lie down*)
(*He repeats aloud*) *Cor meum conturbatum est in me:*
et formido mortis cecidit super me.
Why did I choose that psalm and study it,
To get it thus by rote? I have escaped
The defamating grave by such an inch
That now I tremble. What has moved my heart
To measure life against the weights of death?—
A woman's priceless, pale magnificence,
Docile to each least claim, and sweet as weather
That gems the boughs with florets. Die, go down
'Neath bloody stroke, or feel my breathing stolen
By those I have betrayed—impossible,
While she is counter to my punishment!
Ha! There is subtle noise upon the floor;
It terrifies attention, and its creak
Tolls through my very bowels. Taylor, listen!
Page What is it, sire?
Darnley A little, dangerous sound.
There! Do you hear it?
Page Ay, it is a mouse;
I see him sliding hitherward. Mew, mew!
I'll out of bed, and chase it to its hole.

SCENE VI—*Outside the Kirk o' Fields;* BOTHWELL, PARIS, HAY, *and* HEPBURN

Bothwell Hell! Must I wait on time to do my work,
The unconcerned and common moments, mere
Serfs of occasion?—stand with senses ready,
Yet wait upon a match that will not burn
As quick as hedge-snake moves her rings of skin,
Though fire itself is circling up the splint?
Curse my reliance on a tricksy force
Not bound in this right arm! O weariness,
That mounts to terror! Lads, I shall roar out
Unless the noise begin. The very night
Is but an ear, expecting what it knows
Will burst from silence. Hepburn, the nine months
I lay enwombed were shorter than these seconds
That travail with explosion. Ha, ha, ha!
The glow-worm has a firm shine in the tail;
Have we a Jack-a-lanthorn in our service,
Will-o'-the-Wisp, a lighted impotence,
Lustless and unconducive? On my soul,
The spark is out. Is there no window-pane
Through which I could be spy on my tormentor,
This slack, starved faggot?

Paris Monsieur, round the house

There's such a casement.
Hepburn But the de'il himself,
For all the frying that he gets below,
Would scarcely put his head in through the place
At this sweet time.
Bothwell The air has grown congealed;
'Twill be incapable of prodigy
If kept like this. I'll go.
Hepburn You shall not.
Hay Madness!
My lord, be patient, or the king and you
Will both fly up like witches.
Bothwell Are you certain
The flame caught? There is booming at my heart,
As if the blood touched powder. I am mad,
As all are who await results, and do not
Whip their own actions to the goal. My project
Is gone to sleep, like yon unbusied town
With all the ashen hearths. I cannot choose
But look to it—Halloo! The darkness cracks!
The die is cast. (*Kirk o' Fields is blown into the air*)
Paris (*Falling flat on the ground*) Alas, a thunderstorm
In one affrighting clap. Monsieur, what is't?
Bothwell Oft have I wrought great enterprises, never
They struck me with a fear like this. The pit
Of dun destruction gapes and all the noise
Of torment makes acclaim about my ears.

Hay, Hepburn, is it over? How the air
Was tranquil it invades! I give my deed
A voice, I hear it cry. Up, fellows, run!
Quaking, you fools? It is accomplishment
That shouts and triumphs. Hepburn, lend a torch!
I see the stones, no bodies.
Hay Crushed like rats,
I warrant them.
Hepburn Off, off!
Bothwell The rocks have heard.
Hepburn The people will not sleep.
Bothwell Away, away!
Exeunt in flight

SCENE VII—*Holyrood; a misty, dismal morn: the* QUEEN *paces her bed-chamber distractedly*

Queen How the great theme has shattered me!
The bride
I put to bed is coy, reluctant, dull;
I could not give her counsel as a wife—
One who is disenchanted, tolerant,
Gentle to imperception—who am still
Aggressive and audacious in desire
As any unsunned girl, and, since my marriage,

I know not why, more full of reverie.
She wearied so and vexed me that there was
No mood in me to sleep; but, lying down
In my loosed ruffles for a little rest,
I dropped so sheer off into fantasy
That I began i' the middle of a dream,
Where I was dancing fast to give the tune
To one who touched a deaf, worm-eaten lute,—
Until there came a booming through the air;
And then it seemed that we were thrown together,
Stepping most blithely, and I turned to greet
My sunny David—but the face was Bothwell's,
And with a bitter shrieking I awoke.
They said my baby had been laid to rest
I' the dressing-room; it will remove my thoughts
From all that happened at that bloody stair
If I no longer face the tapestry
Of Venus' bleeding Love. (*Going to the cradle*) How soft he sleeps,
Scotland's small king—a lovely, lusty lad!
And now he opes his eyes and smiles,—a sweet,
Young, morning welcome. (*Taking him up*) As the blessèd Queen,
Although the sword has pierced her very heart,
Can take her babe to sport upon her lap,
And see him catch at cherries, we will laugh
And love together till the angels come
On tiptoe to espy us.

Enter MARY SETON

Mary, Mary!
What terror strikes you? I have nearly dropped
The child; there is a mortal agony
About your lips and eyes. Deliver us
Your message, and remember we are royal,
We can give audience to calamities,
And keep our state.
Mary Seton Lady, the king, the king!
Lord Bothwell comes.

Enter BOTHWELL

Bothwell With sudden, fearful news.
(*To* MARY SETON) Take the young cub away.
Exit MARY SETON *with the child*
My queen, the heavens
Have thought upon your wrongs, and by the shock
Of earthquake, or by sulphurous thunderbolt
Blasted the Kirk o' Fields. You are a widow.
Queen The king is dead? Let me take thought awhile—
My husband . . .
Bothwell David Riccio's murderer
Is lying in his night-shift on the ground.
Queen How slain?
Bothwell (*Apart*) The marble creature! But she caught

Her breath; 'tis not all horror.—I was roused
From my new rest by a great, breaking cry,
Not of men's voices—as it seemed, a nightmare
Of heavy earth that cried out in her sleep,
Convulsed with struggle: then the roaring crowd
Pressed up to me; I ran out in the streets,
And found men swarming round what seemed the mouth
Of an abyss, for 'mid the tumbled walls
Few dared to pass: but I broke through the ring,
And, groping wildly with my torch, half-stumbled
Against a body, which the slanted light
Showed lying scarless.

Queen I had supped with him,
But for remembrance of the bridal hour.
Oh, horrible! he lies there as one murdered,
(*Pacing away and throwing open the door of the supper-room*)
Flung from his bed dishonoured. (*Apart*) Heaven has crept
Into my ancient thoughts, and done the deed,
I, David—I half-prompted in my prayers
When I besought God's pity on your soul.
I am a guilty woman. At the hour
I learned the truth, that the king's missing sword
Was found stuck deep in Riccio's breast, I nurtured
A hope that waxed, almost as waxed the bones
Of my young child, that he might be exposed
To some vast ignominy and distress.

Bothwell (*Coming nearer*) He lies, a heap, 'mid dislocated beams,
And nether stones cast sunward.
Queen (*Apart*) I forgave him;
Yet at my heart there was a reticence,
A strange dissatisfaction.
Bothwell You rejoice
The elements have granted this divorce
Without your stir?
Queen I am more pitiful
Than aught beside. I feel his jewelled hand
That held mine at the altar.
Bothwell (*In a low mutter*) Fire of hell!
Talk not of trifles! I can see him lie,
Just his white back, beyond the muddled heap
Of stones, and mould, and rafters.
Queen We are dazed.
Hepburn, a death makes terrible, new knowledge
For brains to hold. This stroke has overthrown
All constancy of reason: I am blind.
Yet, earl, there is no storm-cloud in the sky;
A mist that drizzles, seeming innocent
Of flame as old men's tears, mere wretchedness,
Inept and with no rage.
Bothwell True, true! Perchance
It was some accident.
Queen How? With what means?
Bothwell Some stores of gunpowder are thereabouts;

The clap was rather earth-born in its voice,
Methought, than of the air.

Queen It burst on slumber,
As judgment on the dead. I seemed to hear
It leap upon the hill-tops, gather breath,
Then shout a zigzag 'larum—while a sickness
Came o'er me as of earthquake, though the posts
O' the bed stood rigid round me as I woke.
My ears yet rumble. But I could not know
The kernel of that uproar was a corpse,
Which called me *wife* and *dearest* yester eve,
A sick, close-clinging boy: this makes me shudder
More than the hideous ground-swell. I have loved
Its victim: God, who registered our troth,
Can make good my affection; it was tried
By wild devices on my husband's part,
Repulse of the outgoings of my love,
If I but leant his way. Oh, I am shaken
To think of my late rancour and impatience,
That found relief in a futurity
Which was without him, brighter, unimpeded,
And blank from his affronts.

(*She throws herself in a chair and covers her eyes, tearless*)

Bothwell She feels some guilt,
Soon shall we be incorporate in the crime,
This woman and myself. At Kirk o' Fields
Our banns have just been published. Ha, the thump

And mettle of my blood! (*Aloud*) He, who is stark
Amid the shrubs, was by all sorts contemned,
Contemned by the indifferent 'mong your subjects—
A despicable husband.

Queen In his eyes
Last night a ruined youthfulness asked pity,
His kiss had soft demands. For many weeks
In disposition he has altered; humble
And penitent he has been tossed from sleep
To death. (*Rising*) My lord of Bothwell, I had rather
Lose life and throne than that this cruel deed
Should stay unpunished. Vengeance rigorous
For God's grace and my comfort shall be dealt:
By witnesses the fact shall be confronted,
And have clear trial.

Bothwell 'Tis impossible
That anything but accident or bolt
From out the sky is guilty.

Queen Could I think so!
My thoughts misgive me.

Bothwell Fie, there is no treason
Has ever wrought a pomp of such destruction
As only comes by thunder.

Enter HUNTLY

Huntly Madam, madam,
Words have been scared away.

Queen And tears as well;
Something is rolled against the gates of weeping.
Huntly You press the bed-post. I shall send your Maries
To nurse this sorrow.
Bothwell (*To* HUNTLY) You and I will hasten
To guard the spot, and see the body laid
Within some private house.
Huntly (*To* BOTHWELL) It was a mine
That did the business.
Queen Traitors among men,
Not the mysterious sky! Their punishment
Pertains then to my birthright as a queen.
Make strict examination. (*To* BOTHWELL) You, my lord,
Our flawless subject, think our crown dishonoured
Until the authors of this factious mischief
Be brought to law and judgment.
Bothwell (*Apart*) She has looked
Her old way at me, not a broken glance,
But full and straight, a jasper seal of favour,
With no complicity. (*Aloud*) Your will is law.
Come, Huntly, I will join you in a moment,
When I have had some drink. *Exit* HUNTLY
(*As he moves to the door*) I never felt
My courage cold like this, nor firmer too:
I see no future but the shaken ground
On which I march to kingship. *Exit*

Enter the MARIES

Queen How I change!
Tears soak my calm—a river with the ice
Turning to river also. It is early.
Light the fire: do not speak. I must lie down,
And think of a great nothing. Is this grief?
I shiver and am conscious of the light,
As if 'twere yesterday begun again,
And yet forgotten. Beg them in the house
To make no noise; that is lord Bothwell's step,
A sounding tread. Death sets such bitterness
In conscience; 'tis his sting! My Maries, kiss me;
Ye put my black dress on when I was married.
We said his hair curled gallantly. Your mouths
Make the past warm that haunts me as a ghost.
Unwrap my sables.

Mary Fleming Now the fire springs bright!

ACT IV.

SCENE I—*The Dule-Chamber in Edinburgh Castle; the* QUEEN *and* MARY LIVINGSTONE

Queen Put out the candles, let the sunshine in;
Mine eyes ache in this painful, petty light.
O Mary, there is spring-tide out of doors,
The hawthorn-buds are breaking. I have glanced
Down from my chamber casement on the moat
Deep, deep below, and there was shining green,
And turfy glimmer on the cold, grey rocks.
It must be blithe without.
Mary Livingstone Round Holyrood
An angry people gathers. Dear my mistress,
Let the black hangings canopy your bed
As lowering thunder-clouds . . .
Queen You cruel girl,
Through the long, sombre record of the night
Did we not kneel? Altho' I fear the touch
Of the stone-tombs, did I make shortened prayer
For his unhouselled soul? Was I not broken
By the great dirge that rose for him?
Mary Livingstone Ay, madam,
The dawn was white about us when we left

The Royal Chapel. You may put religion
Aside, and study vengeance.
Queen For the dead
We will not cease to pray, and they shall never
Be absent from our thoughts. Give me the air;
I swoon again. It is captivity
To breathe in this close darkness. (*She faints*)
Mary Livingstone Let the light
Flood in on her!

Enter LADY LETHINGTON *and* MARY SETON

Mary Seton Alack, what little health
My lady has!
Lady Lethington She must have heard the cries.
Mary Livingstone Unpack your gossip.
Lady Lethington Girls, there is a cartel
Set up, a wicked writing. Peace, she stirs.
Mary Livingstone Stoop nearer.
Mary Seton They have dared to name her name
With Bothwell's and the lady of Buccleuch's.
Queen (*Opening her eyes*) It is a dream. Yet tell
me everything.
You all look reticent.
Mary Seton But you will fall
Back into swoon for comfort.
Queen Let me hear!
I shall not build on faintness for my help;

Rather on God, my Truth.
Mary Seton In slanderous night
You were writ up . . .
Queen A murderess. Make my pillow,
Now she has loosed the shutters. We shall need
Time to prepare our nerve. How firm the city
Holds to the land in sunlight! I am firm;
I shall not slip back into faint or drowse,
For anything they say within the street.
Fetch me his miniature.
Mary Livingstone The king's?
Queen I laid it
Beneath my psalter.
Mary Livingstone Madam, here it is.
(*They gather round the* QUEEN *as she gazes at it*)
Queen His eyes are touchstones: I have thrown mine wide;
They blench not from his portrait any more
Than from his white, blind body. As I stood
Below the feet, my grief was turned by death
To stone of wonder: it was marvellous
I saw what once embraced me, spoke my name,
Wronged me, and wept me back. That awful hand—
Impossible to think of!—wedded me;
On that small piece of sculpture, once his mouth,
I had expended kisses. . . . Then the past
Grew void; I could not weep:
Yet be my witnesses I meet his eyes.

How dead you lie about me! Take the picture.
You say the Earl of Bothwell is accused
Of helping in this deed?
Lady Lethington 'Tis said he wrought
The very murder.
Queen (*Rising*). Girls, there have been days
On which the king, my husband, spoke such insult
I could have plucked the sky down on his head:
Lord Bothwell never hated him, no cause
Of quarrel lay between them, no distrust,
No memories, and no shame.—A throstle, hark!
Sing, sing, keen bird! Oh, I forget myself;
My anger is an impulse at my throat
As piercing as your love!—Can punishment
Take aim, when the Lord Admiral and I
Are found in fault? I recollect the eve
Of David Riccio's murder as a point
From which my new suspicions dart on those
Who hide behind detraction. What strange spell
Is fixing me to gaze on Kirk o' Fields,
On that black, hollow spot? The noon has altered;
Close up the shutters. I have never seen
A world so sullen . . . and you say my name
Is on the Tolbooth? If I bend my ear
I catch hoarse cries; I could not suffer hate;
That buzzing frenzies me.—Of all this evil
There is no fraction in my soul. It seems
As if I stood amid a roaring crowd,

Till to my deafened senses the vile tumult
Seems to arise within. Am I a ghost
To pace yon uninhabitable rooms,
Where I put on my silver-broidered gown
Hardly a week ago, and trimmed my hair
The newest fashion, softly brushing it
Clear from the temples? I must leave this haunt
For Seton.

Lady Lethington With Lord Bothwell?

Queen He shall mind
My boy; all people shall have knowledge how
I rate their libel—the one, honest man,
Who in his eagerness to do me service
Almost waylays my thoughts. Argyle and Huntly,
With Lethington, shall give me private escort
To my deep country home, where I can live
Retired, and watch the willows' glinting buds.
I have a captive's instincts, and already
Anticipate small pleasures with a passion
Intemperately ardent. (*Looking out*) Who is that
Rides hither from the High Street? Shame! The earl,
Guarded by fifty men; his hand is moving
Above his hilt. Close up the shutters—darkness!

SCENE II—*Edinburgh*; MORAY'S *lodging: a meal laid on the table*—MORAY *solemnly pacing up and down; he stops and looks toward St. Giles'*

Moray A godly city! Up and down the bruit
Of murder spreads; they name her by her name,
She is at last proclaimed. How I have watched
The will of heaven, as a blank sentinel,
Set on a tower before the lurid sky,
Who keeps his station howsoe'er the clouds
May burthen or discharge. I am exempt
From any portion in this infamy;
As David's son, restrained by Providence
From bloody acts, that he with stainless hand
Might rear the temple-walls, I am withdrawn
From sight and warrant of unholy deeds,
Which being done advance me and the cause
Of Christ's religion. How I lean on Him,
Feeling within a kingship sure as His,
Founded on righteousness.

Enter LETHINGTON

The time is near.

Lethington What, wrapt in doubt, my lord! I little thought
When we got rid of that untoward, young fool,
There would be such excitement on his death.

A fool is not so rare that one must miss him,
And mourn his loss, and give him wild farewells,
As 'twere impossible to find his like.

Moray So royal a victim: but what gives me cause
For gravest apprehension is the fact
That the queen's name is touched with obloquy.
The hand that flared along the palace-wall
Hath penned the Tolbooth cartel: they are doomed—
Adulterer and adulteress.

Lethington Devilish lies!
The queen acts in a noble childishness
Of unsuspicion, ready to espouse
Whoever is accused, since she herself,
So rankly charged, is wholly without fault.
At Seton now she wears her olden smile;
It makes me happy that we widowed her
To see her beauty peep again as gay
As the young gorse when fire hath harried it;
But while she freshens in the country wind
The Canongate grows ribald.

Moray It affirms
The simple truth: my sister, Lethington,—
I knew it at the hour of Riccio's death,
And therefore stayed not my avenging hand—
Is full of amorous charms and subtlety;
And will not rest till she has brought her crown
To shame with her idolatry and lust.

Lethington Well, 'tis an aspect and a possible

Solution of occurrents, though I own
That I mislike it. The ambassador
Will dine with us to-night?

Moray Yes, Killigrew.

Lethington Then we must play our parts.

Moray I have desired
Lord Bothwell's company; in entertainment
He may declare his wickedness: we find
In Scripture that the feast will oft expose
Unguarded bosoms. The Lord Chancellor
Makes up our number.

Lethington As a merry five,
Who know the merit in their purposes,
Let's drink and talk as 'twere before the fall.
You move uneasily.

Moray I would be private
'Till the appointed hour.

Lethington Yet look not black
To very guiltiness! *Exit* MORAY
Truly, murder is like the small-pox; those infected, if they be of sound habit, may recover, and no blemish on their skin; others there are—it will be up hill down dale with their complexions to their lives' end. . . . My good compeer suffers religion to play duenna to his soul; her presence gives warrant to the offences 'tis her office to ignore. He spied Morton from the window. These two are confederate; there is the make of a ruler in either, and for my part John Knox's *Monstrous Regiment of Women*

has my sanction. Women cannot govern, being under the dominion of a god. Melvil told her roundly it would be in her a gross oversight to marry a man full of all vices: she said she had no such thing in her mind, and came to me for illumination. I told Melvil to retire diligently before dinner, since we should all shortly be killed if Lord Bothwell had bruit of the business; and for her—I looked dreamily at the damask in her cheeks. She is devoted to destruction and she knows it not.

Re-enter MORAY *with* MORTON

Yet to be put to sea by Dan Cupid in a cockboat is no mean fate. The merchant-ship lades and unlades her cargo with care. Traffic and weariness! Perchance it were wiser to rock on the waves and sink. (*Aloud*) Well, gentlemen, the latest rumours?

Morton We must stand by him, bear the matter through.

The queen is branded fiercelier every hour,
And every hour with fiercer lavishness
Pours honours on the earl.

Moray Hush, hush! His step.

Lethington Not stealthy as a murderer's. Do not keep
A visage so discordant. We must greet
Our willing instruments.

Enter BOTHWELL

Good even, earl,

An hour ago I crossed you unperceived,
Mounting the Castle Hill. How well your looks
Sustain your innocence! Calumniation
Slinks in the rear at menace of your loud
And angry voice; the blithe temerity
Of your undaunted brow and liberal stride
Themselves are witness to you.

Bothwell We shall see
At the assize, the queen shall promise me,
Who will look blithe and who will hang the face.
Old Lennox pesters her.

Moray If you are cleared
Of the aspersion . . .

Bothwell If—what? Stand by me
Or I will blab; I have the queen's own ear;
The streets are filling with my retinue,
And every hour my conscience drops a load.
That marriage with Jane Gordon—she petitions
For a divorce, and she shall have it too.

Moray Peace! The ambassador!

Enter KILLEGREW

Most noble guest,
You were more welcome were we not persuaded
Your mistress' anger at a crime so strange
And horrible that it confounds belief
Speeds you to Scotland.

Killegrew An incredible
Calamity.
Lethington It has transfixed us all.
Two days and nights we doubted, charged the skies
With brewing thunderbolts, uptore the earth,
Found in its entrails no betraying store,
And finally as men, baulked at all points,
Betook ourselves to slander. Such invention
There hath not been, such malice of hot minds,
Since Adam first was tempted to assign
His trespass to a lady. The result . . .
Bothwell Humph! I will put to silence this abuse,
This setting up of placards, tickets, bills
Of defamation. I have found a cartel
Reeking in red that names me murderer:
By heaven, I'll give them taste of their own blood
Who thus confront my eyes with effigies,
And keep my ears a-simmer with the cry
Of devil, witch . . .
Moray Remember, gentlemen,
My sister's honour.
Killegrew There the point that touches
My noble mistress; not for the world's wealth
Would her pure breast conceive impiety
Of any prince that breathes: hence she implores
That were the man found guilty of this crime
Her nearest friend . . .
Bothwell We would convict him straight.

I have myself o'erturned the blackened stones
Of Kirk o' Field, and to the unsmirched corse
Paid honourable rites.

Moray Around our princess
Were clustered her most faithful counsellors;
No traitor in the camp. I left her thus,
A month ago, being summoned to St. Andrews
By my sore-travailling wife: while by her side,
Assiduous to assuage, a messenger
Burst in and turned my conjugal distress
To fear and passion for the commonwealth.
No clue, no clue, though I have passed my time
Among the preachers, praying openly
Of God both to reveal and to revenge.

Morton 'Tis all conjecture; lacking evidence
We must refrain from judgment.

Bothwell I will clear
My name, and quickly

Lethington (*Apart to* MORAY) Would indeed we all
Had bosoms as transparent.—Good our host,
Methinks your dinner cools.

Moray True, I have guests.
Be seated friends. (*To* KILLEGREW) We are your mistress' servants
In all, and to her health and to the blest
Conjunction of these realms—we drink. A pledge!
(*They drink, except* BOTHWELL)

Morton (*Apart to him*) Drink to your blest conjunction.

Lethington England holds
Our choicest hopes, and our young church in her
Must find a nursing-mother. (*To* BOTHWELL) Earl, we find
Such comfort in your confidence to wipe
Stain from your honour and that dearer name
That is the treasure of our loyalty,
We drink to your acquittal.
Bothwell Ay, the queen!
Couple my name with hers and I am blest.
God love her! Gentlemen, he is a traitor
Who harbours of the queen an evil thought.
(*They drink*)

SCENE III—*Seton; the great hall*

MARY SETON *and* LADY LETHINGTON

Mary Seton Methinks she grows each day more beautiful;
There's change, and when I go to waken her,
She is not lying dormant in her grace,
But ready for me, leaning toward the window
With her great, buoyant eyes; she has such talk
Of stars above the city seen at dawn,
Like flowers in blow, so round and luminous
They are a joy to look on; and the birds
Keep her alert from daybreak. Like a child,
With a soft wildness in serenity,

She lies, and I must love her.

Lady Lethington Recollect,
Among the daffodils of Inchmahome
You found her perfect; she forgot too soon
When the young robins died. I thought her hard.

Mary Seton She was not hard to the rough city-cries;
As often as they reached her she bent down,
And sobbed through heaving shoulders.

Lady Lethington She neglects
Her broidery-frame for shooting at the butts;
'Tis ill advised.

Mary Seton To take physicians' counsel?

Lady Lethington But her dule!
At Seton she discards her heavy veil,
And glides, a shepherdess, among the trees,
Her head so lightly covered that the wind
Raises and drops her hair. It vexes me
More than aught else to see her noblemen
Gather together in a knot, while she
Carelessly paces up and down the sward,
With the Lord Bothwell as ambassador.

Mary Seton He brings her tidings of the prince.

Lady Lethington Ah, so;
If you believe it.

Enter the QUEEN *and* BOTHWELL

They will cross the room.
Seton, she lets him lead her by the hand.

Queen This slander that is just hypocrisy
At gossip with dame malice in the sun !
Since you will have it so, an open trial !
Let your accusers look upon your brow ;
They shall be summoned to the Tolbooth—there
To meet you, happy that you are a man
With sword to finger. When you are acquitted,
The traitor who still doubts you in his heart
Shall answer to your challenge, and myself
By regal proclamation stamp you pure :
For I have strangely felt about my heart
The blight of sudden, outward blackness cast
By winds, from who knows whence, upon my name.
I must be merry, or the withering threads
Would show among my hairs ! This world of grass,
The sappy buds, and of the luting birds . . .
I run into the springtide for my trial ;
The dews and lights acquit me. Yet, my lord,
The knowledge that another has been covered
With like suspicion, one who will be strong
To make men cry *Not Guilty*, is a pleasure
Beyond the voice of earth which sanctions all
That I can prove of innocence. Remember,
We are companions, and you fight for me
Slaying our accusation.

Bothwell Gracious queen,
I am unworthy . . . I can only stablish
A point of law, an *alibi*.

Queen Enough!
What twisted minds will after that dispute
Our foreignness to guilt. (*To* MARY SETON) Here, sweet, unpin
My little hat of taffety.
Bothwell (*Apart*) Amulets
Are always small, yet work on fate and hell:
That charm, that bit of black and feathered stuff,
Amid the glints of hair, is masterful
O'er sense and and reason—I could kiss the thing,
And half possess the owner: such distraction
Shoots from a trifle in a woman's dress,
If she conjure it to be beautiful
By what she is herself. That little hat!
Queen I long to see you triumph! You must ride
Straight down the High Street back to Holyrood,
With flying banners. Is there anything
Can give you warrant of my favour? See,
This sleeve of my own stitching.
Mary Seton Pardon, madam,
You wrought it for the king: it was not worn.
Queen. But he shall wear it who alone of all
My subjects never quarrelled with my lord,
But served him with a loyal constancy
No variable humour could remit.
(*To* BOTHWELL) Take this and cherish it as you have heard
Its history.

Bothwell It would not fit my wrist.
Will you not broider me another sleeve,
With *Kiip Trest*, my own motto, for device,
So I be found by judgment of my peers,
Worthy such wondrous, condescending love?

Queen I will not wait their verdict. To my silks
The first o'erclouded day! Farewell, my lord.

Exit BOTHWELL

Girls, you have stubborn brows, and, I must think,
Sweethearts among the Tolbooth renegades;
You stand as very elders of the kirk,
So rigid and admonishing. Go, play
Out in the sunshine; I will rest awhile:
Give me the amber cushions. *Exeunt* MARIES
'Tis for wrath
I weep, for very wrath; such hardihood,
And none conceive his stature! Ah, in all
A man, how he evokes my womanhood!
I have not dreamed so since I saw him first
As captain of the Scottish Guard in France.
How I remember!—for his hair and beard
Were brown, of colour like a squirrel, brighter
A little than his skin's deep-shadowed brown;
And it was magic to me how his eyes
Were grey with purple rims: my Maries then
Could see no beauty in his resolute,
Gashed brow, and hasty lips. I trusted him,
And turned me over many a night to dream

How he had dragged me from my enemies.
Ah, then, what golden rills
Of youth coursed through me, sudden bounties, gifts
Of goodness, incommensurable joys
That never had an issue. And to think
The name I honoured in my childish thoughts,
And wove my visions of . . . O monstrous world!

Re-enter LADY LETHINGTON

Lady Lethington Madam, the earl your brother is arrived,
And craves to speak with you—he stays without.
(*She ushers in* MORAY *and retires*)

Moray My dearest sister.

Queen You return at last!
James, you have tarried cruelly in Fife,
And left me helpless in a ring of foes
Invisible. I know not who they are,
Who thus entoil me in mysterious,
Fresh hate: the principalities of hell
It seems are loosed against me. You are come,
I trust, to lay the storm of evil tongues,
And speed the trial.

Moray If there were a way . . .

Queen Be bold.

Moray I cannot. Yet if you were truly
A Protestant—within the Bible leaves
There is an awful word . . .

Queen Such tenderness
Is no wise to my mind. Since slander now
Shrieks on the housetops, let the truth be spread
From vantage as surpassing.
Moray God Himself
Averts his eyes from such iniquity
As were exposed, if, with too pitiless
A zeal to punish, we laid bare the facts.
Queen Whom can they injure? Noble names are hurt
In this unchecked suspicion: let me hear
The worst you can disclose. You have a gaunt
And hollow paleness, almost of the tint
Of very guilt itself.
Moray I suffer, Mary.
It is incredible! Now God forgive
My weakness that I cannot bear the truth.
Queen Dismiss this speech of broken sentences,
These peddling prayers that turn asquint to hell.
Arraign yourself! If through your ancient hate
To that poor, murdered boy, you could not brook
To see in place of kingship, you so far
Stooped as to mix in the conspiracy
For his undoing, speak!
Moray (*Apart*) A subtle Guise!
Mary, I am not come here to condemn—
Queen That is my office, when the criminal
Hath made confession. Then you knew of this
From the beginning? Do not lower your eyes;

It was your way of vengeance for his fits
Of pouting insolence, to get him strangled,
My Henry, in his bed at Kirk o' Field?
You had no pity—such a very boy!
O vile—as your own origin! To think
That I have called you brother, set you up
As tutor to my youth . . .
Moray I hold the keys
Of life and death to you—take note of that!
There is a ruin as of yawning hell
In which I can engulf your paramour.
Be patient! Cease from railing. You might hoot
From your own palace windows—the reply
Would be an execration. Mary Stuart,
Look in your heart, or, if you will not, turn
Your face and in that mirror recognize
Your husband's murderer. The accomplices
I will not question; to my heart it sticks
That you are tottering underneath a load
Of murderous guilt and lust so infinite . . .
Queen Lust! Have you lost your senses?
Moray So extreme
I cannot extricate you, cannot hope
To save you from the executioner,
If you confide not your whole sin to me,
And suffer me to arbitrate.
Queen What sin?
I know not any sin. I am distraught.

Who are in league against me?
Moray Do not fear
That death by stoning that the church declares
Your portion. If you heartily repent
Your former life, desist from your affection
For the Lord Bothwell—(*The Queen makes an indignant movement*) Stay, you will not do't,
I know: therefore I must abandon you,
I must retire, and learn in Italy
That you have lost your kingdom.—Do not move!
I know your madness and persistency.
The time is come that I must give you up
To Satan for a season; while in peace
I spend my exile.
Queen James, you frighten me.
Has Knox been dinning this into your brain?
Stay with me, let me understand. Protect
The earl—he is most innocent.
Moray Alas,
You dare not plead I should extend protection
To your fair, ruined head.
Queen You must not go.
Moray Will you not suffer it? Must I remain
To have my blood shed in the open streets?
Lord Bothwell sets a price upon my life.
Queen He has a violent temper. You must go;
But—then what is to follow?
Moray Kiss me, Mary;

For all my life I would not have you guess
The wild work of the morrow. Fare you well.

SCENE IV—*Holyrood; by a window of the palace. The* QUEEN *and* LADY LETHINGTON

Lady Lethington The space is over-packed with life—
heads, heads,
And further heads: while everywhere, like stalks
Lifting proud flowers, the horses raise their men
Gaily above the citizens. These vassals
Of Hepburn have fine seat. The Douglas banner
Is coming forward; there is Morton's hat
A-peek above his eyes. The fussy sunshine
Makes Bothwell's trial seem a great event.
Queen To clear one's name is signal and of gist
More grave than other actions. Think of it!
Lord Lennox, the accuser, is ashamed
To show his face, and speak his proofless charges,
Yet would delay his victim's just acquittal
From world-estranging slander. This live noon
Is almost welcome as if I myself
Were coming out of cloud.
Lady Lethington There is a sway
Of faces toward the courtyard.
Queen Ah, to shine

Clear as the light before those Argus-eyes,
That zealous crowd!
Lady Lethington Earl Bothwell!
Queen He is laughing,
And yet he is not—'tis so quickly gone:
His carriage is defiant, though he bends
As if to justice that's invisible.
Who rides alongside? Morton!
Lady Lethington With the grin
Of some heraldic lion; a golden man,
Complexioned like his hoards.
Queen And on the left
Who rides behind?
Lady Lethington It is my husband, madam.
How cross his lips! He had a weary night,
And took no breakfast. He shall throw me favours:
To-day he kissed me inattentively
The first time since our marriage. (*She waves*) He is riding
As if asleep. But, see, Lord Bothwell looks.
Queen His sovereign's hand shall greet him (*She waves*) (*Apart*) How his joy
Shot up like a first flame when it ignites.
(*To* LADY LETHINGTON) The earl is strangely altered —pale, across
His brow a sullen mark.
Lady Lethington It is the scar
He got in youth when recklessly he stole

The English gold; and sometimes agitation
Will make such hurts flare red.
Queen Within an hour
A page shall seek the Tolbooth and bring news
How justice prospers.—What triumphant noon!

SCENE V—*The Hall of Seton Castle*

Enter MORTON *and* BOTHWELL

Morton Where have you been, my lord?
Bothwell A walk. The air
In country places helps me to make plain
My meshed and beating project to myself.
Morton Last night I hardly slept at all, so joyous
Was Ainslie's wine within me. We are pledged,
By our rare tavern-fellowship, the greeting
We gave to your acquittal, the attention
With which your high proposals met our ear,
Across the cups and bounty of your feast,
To back you as the husband, for the queen,
Of our best, native choice: but you must play
The forthright wooer.
Bothwell Ho! I need no lesson
In woman-winning.
Morton Have you yet come near

Your proposition to her?

Bothwell She has been
At mass this Sunday or in company;
Our elemental question to the sex
Forms not except in private.

Morton (*Glancing down a passage*) Man, she comes.
I meet her not too frequently; her eyes
Grow crystal points in scrutiny of one
Long absent from the court. *Exit*

Bothwell I have a fear
Before her, a firm seizure of my speech,
That dams up fate and passion. She is won—
Not as was Anna Throndssön, nor my dame,
Jane Gordon, nor the buxom waiting-girl,
Delighted Bessie Crawford: these were thrown
By my mere, single energy; it takes
Ancestral forces, bone-bred vehemence,
To compass what my fathers lusted for
In fiery years ago.

Enter the QUEEN

Queen Help me, my lord;
I am in doubt and pain: all day my guards
Have had ill-brows about me. Yonder sky
Of wind and darkness cannot match the looks
These arquebusiers venture. On my word,
I am defenceless if they mutiny,
Save for your valour, Hepburn.

Bothwell Hark! Their growls!
Madam, the varlets come. Rest tremorless,
I will obstruct this insolence.

Enter Arquebusiers

1st Arquebusier We need;
Give us our pay.
2nd Arquebusier Or we will use our weapons
To do offence.
3rd Arquebusier Money! Our silver pay!
Bothwell (*Seizing the ring-leader*) Choke down your greed, you villain! Pay and hire!
You dun a lovely majesty as if
She held the common purse. A beggar, clipt
By fortune of all gear, would have a sense
Less ribald than you show. Advance one step—
All shall be hanged as traitors, and the boughs
Swing heavier favours than their leaves above
The daylit ground to-morrow.
Queen Do they lack,
And feel the nip of that which is to us
A winter—empty pockets? They shall have
Two florins each, the utmost a crowned lady
Can find within her coffers.
Bothwell Do you hear?
No jolting me, no rescue of this rogue,
Your frothy leader, till I let him free,

His wind-pipe swollen. Your queen is merciful,
And honours you with silver, who deserve
Cord for your noise.
2nd Arquebusier Down with the payment then.
No promises!
Queen It is with grievous sorrow
We take in such distrust.
Bothwell Hence, quit the room.
The chancellor will give you audience duly
At eight o'clock. Why, why! I say *begone!*
And when I say it, go!
2nd Arquebusier The bully!
Bothwell (*Loosening the leader's throat with a shake*)
March,
With inclination to the graciousness
That spares to trounce your swerving. Out, I say,
And to your places! *Exeunt* Arquebusiers
They have vanished.—Oh,
You flutter like a star through widow'd black,
That night-hood round the pallor of your face!
You had been undefended in this strait,
Except for my bluff service.
Queen Which we thank.
Such rancour in my household was disclosed
So suddenly it shook me.
Bothwell My loved queen,
The men you rule are heady as the blasts
That veer about our hills, and weariness

Of colour in your beauty testifies
The hard pitch of your toil. Take thought how far
A close devotion manly at your side
Would comfort and disburthen you, a love
Obedient and executive,—as always
Your general is the actor of your wrath
When deeds to do must be unwomanlike.
(*Apart*) She doth not flush; the crystals in her cheek
Are growing sharp and brilliant.—All the land
Sighs at your lonesome task; your nobles join
To urge you to more livelihood of health
Than moping labour brings you. . . . There is none
To whom you have more lent in condescension,
More trusted with those offices that irk
The English foe than—
(*Suddenly throwing himself before her*) I confess the fact;
I love you with a man's love, deep as hell,
Wild as the sea's for earth. My life has been
Spent under hatred, solitude, misfortune,
But ever with a singleness of hope
To serve you in the highest.
Queen (*Distractedly*) I am struck,
As if the roof had fallen.
Bothwell What, you can wonder
That men should throw whole years of loyalty
Beneath your feet as trash, you masterpiece
Of world's enchantment; who in gait and speech
Are lovelier than the beauties of old praise;

Your steps surpass their kisses, and your voice
Makes their best glance unwished for.
Queen Are you mad?
Well may you kneel: my other noblemen
Have trespassed out of hatred, or at least
Indifference to my reign. I have not found
The insult of base love in any one,
Save you alone. I am a widow, scarce
Of two month's dule, a murder's remnant—you,
A man but nine months married to a lady
I first bespoke as friend. How dare you rouse
The Bruce within me, the untempered fire
Of king on king I carry to the grave
In pledge of my descent? Henceforth, be sure,
You are an exile from my confidence.
Banished again! What reason do I find
In Arran's frenzy, which accused your faith
As liegeman to your princess! Self-condemned,
You may not hope for mercy from my doubt.
(*Apart*) How still he is, how still!—We do not need
Your convoy or attendance as we journey
Through Lothian on the morrow. To remain
Even where you are displeases us. Goodnight.

Exit by inside door

(BOTHWELL *rises and stands straight up without the least motion*)

Bothwell This woman! Somewhere she has pledged my soul;

We have drunk wine together on some bare,
Brown hill of chaos, while the wanton lights,
Young meteors flaming lawless through the heaven,
Peered at our rampant revel. We were one
Before the stars were broken to their spheres ;
Part of the huge, unsevered element
When day and darkness hugged. I know that far
Below the rise of rivers, underneath
The sowing of the mine's unfathomed seed,
There was this sunken bond. She flings me now
Contempt, my lass, my lass ! What should we find
In woman but the lavish side of God,
Before the thought of judgment crippled Him,
When He was soft, creative, fostering, free ?
Contempt, contempt ! Night's stinging moments spin,
And stir me to an act: the regicides
With their dismaying weapons shall have done
By far less intimate irreverence
On majesty than I in person dare.
Hell will be puzzled what to do with such
As I shall show myself, it has no code
That can entangle me, no quarter builded
That might immure my unimagined courage,
No flames to equal mine. The royal witch,
She sought to disenchant me in the guise
Of formal coldness, she the beauty, she
The madding, unfoiled beauty. How the air
Dreads me, I breathe on lion-like ! She has said

She needs no convoy! I will furnish one:
She must with me the merry, downward way,
Where demons cackle. I will meet my bride
At Foulsbrigg with an army. This contempt
Is an infectious plague! *Exit by outside door*

SCENE VI—*Dunbar; a room opening on the courtyard.* LETHINGTON *is discovered guarded by* BLACKADDER

Lethington So we are captives!

Blackadder With the queen's consent: 'tis her doing.

Lethington It was her grace's command that she should be met at Foulsbrigg, that her bridle-rein should be turned by Lord Bothwell, her people disarmed and led captive to Dunbar! All this is of her connivance!

Blackadder Well, she provoked it. A lack of gunners on the walls gives permission to enter the keep. I pray you let not my lord find you in this temper, or, I advertise you, you will get but slaughter at his hands.

Lethington You give honest counsel. I have already had contest for my life; if my sovereign lady had not laid her white hands upon my breast, I had perished like Riccio at her feet.

Blackadder I must now release my lord Melvil.

Lethington And detain an honest penman, a poor secretary, worth no man's malice? I shall scratch the stones with my sonnets if you do not deliver me.

Blackadder I doubt not, when you have slept on this business, you will devise a method of escape. Mr. Secretary, I shall not too narrowly observe you. 'Tis the lady must be guarded for my master with all vigilance. *Exit*

Lethington Will that villain mishandle her? Morton blurted out the miscreant had hope to be her bridegroom, and I let it pass. By heaven, I am persuaded responsibility lies about the purlieus of inaction. The stripping thieves may be corrigible; the core of evil is in the eye of the Levite. (*Pacing.*) A pretty adventure for St. Mark's Even, the April sunshine tracing my prison-bars against the wall. I have been an unfaithful witness; but my sovereign lady shall never know of my infamy: for I had as lief speak of the base things of my nature to God as to a woman. There are vaults for the lodging of vileness: bats are but birds of a sick conscience. Yet I know not why I should take on me the whole enormity of her perdition, seeing she is wrecked of her own nature, as our first Mother, though the snake lay in the grass. Would that Eve had been longer in the tutelage of the serpent, and refrained from blabbing to her husband of matter that, delicately handled, had secured her supremacy! But a woman can by no means keep a good thing to herself. My mistress stuffs every smile with incomparable favours. Then to repulse him!—That repulse has been her ruin. Let a woman set the man who loves her at her left hand, if she crave a fiend for her torment. Alack, she has lost God's favour, her own reputation, and the hearts of

all England, Ireland, and Scotland. All hearts? Yes, she has lost them all; but she has covered me, the chameleon, with the very hue of her misfortune. I am hers till death. She shall undo me slowly.

SCENE VII—*Dunbar; a chilling, gusty April afternoon: the* QUEEN *is seated in a window-seat, overlooking the sea*

Queen (*Glancing toward the door*) But this is surely how they turn the key
Upon a captive! What strange dealings now
Would fortune have with me? Ah, the blithe morn
We journeyed here escaped from Holyrood!
This is the very room, where I, a' hungered,
Ate the fresh eggs, and sang for simple joy
Of liberty, while our good host looked on,
A great *God love her!* in his glowing eyes.
To-day he had another look; he pulled
My bridle-rein, and I forbore to strive;
As in a fortress, when they hear the step
Of foemen climbing up the secret stair,
They make no more contention on the walls.
I listen at the heart . . . Oh, foolishness!
In all that ragged country of wild sea
There is no comfort for the eye until

It rests upon the solemn light-house rock,
Whence light will issue, as the darkness spreads,
And found a safety for the mariner:
My good Lord Admiral has been to me,
In my perplexed and tempest-beaten life,
So sure a lode-star. (*The door is unlocked*)

Enter BOTHWELL

Had you entered softly,
My earl, you would have heard me praising you;
But what new danger is a-foot that thus—
Pardon, my lord!—as a rough borderer
You intercepted us as we rode back
To Holyrood, and, darkly hinting peril,
Made us your sudden guest?

Bothwell (*In a low mutter*) And prisoner.—Why,
There are some dangers that you must not know;
We keep the details from a princess' ear
Of meditated treason. You are safe
Within these walls . . . most safe from all pursuit,
And rid of evil counsellors.

Queen How safe?
Safe! That was Ruthven's cry; I was secure
When my robe bore a streak of Riccio's blood,
When my child leapt in terror! *Safe* . . . from whom?

Bothwell From meddling intervention, from the need
Of playing widow, and, in policy's
Dull phrase, refusing me your hand. My love,

Now are you safe from the confederate eyes
Of blinking, envious gossips. The blank sea
Before us—look at it !—a pure, white sheet;
No cipher possible: yet in its sight,
Its unrecording sight, there shall be action
Would bring great kings to key-hole of that door
Were there but bruit of it: an enterprise
More hazardous and unappalled than aught
On earth attempted. Can you not conjecture,
My beauty? 'Tis more telling in effect
Than in rehearsal. How your colour rises,
Blood-red as your carnations! Ah, more wonders!
I knew you would be wonderful the moment
I had you thus discrowned and unattended:
Like some great sight of nature you must be
Explored in solitude. How magical
The alteration in your lips and brow—
A fearful, fluttering woman! Oh, you needed
This sequestration, this harsh discipline
To bring you to your senses—mark the phrase!—
Your womanly, warm senses. Seated there,
By the chink casement high above the sea,
It is a throne that has but one descent,
One deep humiliation. You refused
So simply, absolutely all my proffered
And honourable homage . . . A fair princess!
The falcon to the prey; and what a quarry!
A queen? Aye, queen all over to the small,

Protesting foot that beats against my words.
Will you not deign a parley?
Queen James of Hepburn,
Out of your mouth there shall not rise such words
As burn my cheek; for I have found no treason
In any of your actions.
Bothwell None in this?
It has a fair complexion . . . What a sudden,
Sharp storm is rushing in! It covers you
With flecks of foam. I love the lashing wind.
(*Putting up a shutter; then bending over her*)
You thought I was the Lord High Admiral,
Sleek and submissive, fitting you a pinnace
To sail to Alloa, proud to steer your craft
Though the Lord Darnley were a passenger:
I am a pirate, and I take my pleasure
Thus, thus! (*Passionately seizing her hand and kissing her*)
Oh, you are proud, you do not wince!
I pray you cry me mercy, for I have
No grace for those dark, alienated eyes:
I know they glittered thus on Châtelar,
Ordering the headsman. He insulted you,
You say; I urge he found you heavenly fair,
High, unattainable except by force:
He crept to you the lad's vile, sneaking way;
I take possession of you as a man.
Make free surrender, would you have my triumph
Unmixed with your despair. To gain my prize

I have made desperate havoc with events;
'Twixt me and my ambition you have set
Such obstacles! But I have hewn them down;
Now you alone stand between me and all
I covet.

Queen The crown matrimonial?

Bothwell I dare you mock me in the lisping tones
Of your young, craven dotard. I shall take
All matrimonial rights, all dignities,
And never harry you with petulance.
Do not fold down those lovely marble hands
As they would never tremble any more.
Breathe on me, touch me!

Queen You would be a king,
Loaded with honour. 'Twas my husband's first
Entreaty the ambassadors should give him
Full royal title—hand-plight on the bond.

Bothwell These dead, chill fingers!

Queen (*Rising*) Let us ride to town.

Bothwell To-night?

Queen This instant. There will be suspicion
I am detained against my pleasure, which
My subjects scarce will brook.

Bothwell We will ride forth
Together when the briny air has given
My bride another cheek; two triumphing,
Young lovers. Curse this arid pensiveness;
Will nothing break you in? Why, I have seen you

Let your soft, ruddy hair blow in my face
As a flapped banner, you who banish me
Your smiles, your lips. Deep, dominating clouds
Are on your brow. I tell you, Marie Stuart,
If you bend on me those remorseless eyes
You will arouse the dull pangs of such hate
As kept the devil patient in the glades
Of Eden. I esteem you now a thing
To cow and trample.

Queen One who doubted you
Less than all other creatures in the world,
My once-belovèd servant.

Bothwell Ah, your tones
Have broken from their ice; the great, slow tears
Are come at last. Dearest, you have been wed,
Twice-wedded,—never loved.

Queen Yea, on this wise,
How often by the king!

Bothwell You shed no tears
On him, no great, unspeakable reproach;
He could not hurt you. O my soft-browed queen,
Have we not shared a secret, you and I,
On through your plighted bondage to the hour
Of your deliverance, and 'tis broken now
With terror, as the shaking up of tombs
Upon the day of judgment. Were you roused
After a dusty, unsuspicious sleep
A thousand years in Holyrood, and bidden

Go fetch your husband—would you dare unlock
The neighbour tomb?
Queen Nay, but I do not doubt
With half-affrighted wits I should look out,
And bribe an angel to bring thitherward
My trusty earl . . .
Bothwell O excellent caprice!
And with his arm around you . . .
Queen I would say
In simple hardihood I loved the man,
I held him worthy, and to him would cling
Silent, the while my clamorous lords rehearsed
Their memories of me. Now indeed you laugh.
Ay, let us laugh together; yet I fear
These good men are conspirators: I could
Unfold my reasons, but to-night I tire,
As once before after too long a ride.
Send Melvil to me, it is growing dusk.
Bothwell Melvil is gone.
Queen I am right weary, cold,
And sick at heart. The flame is almost ash
Upon the stone. Go, fetch my women to me.
I would have rest and warmth.
Bothwell Your maids are back
At Holyrood.
Queen Then do you light the fire,
And bring me supper. O believe me, earl,
I know a prisoner's shifts; in my own palace

I and Argyle have broken bread together
For very hunger. Give me entertainment;
Retain the borderer's virtues: to a guest
Shelter and safe repose.

Bothwell I will return. *Exit*

Queen To keep him human! 'Tis my single safety
To show him all my love; I ne'er have wanted
Resource. I will make speed to victory
Under the lowering heavens.

Re-enter BOTHWELL *with firewood, food, and wine*

Why, we are back
To simple manners, yet I keep my state.
You bring a light, and, see! my dripping cloak
Is a wet shroud about me.—Can you find
The clasp?—Unbuckle it, and set to dry:
Now make a ruddy blaze. Here at Dunbar
I must be merry, for I feel at home
In this great room with access to the air,
Free winds, and hurricane.

Bothwell (*Unclasping and shaking her cloak*) A stormy petrel
With spray upon her wings!

Queen Now let us eat;
But, as a grace, if I have used you hardly
Think it my rash, quick temper, and forgive.
So now you have your will; at supper-time
I never can be formal: 'tis the hour

For much unburthening of the heart. My lord,
Would you but give safe-conduct to my speech . . . .
Bothwell I will lie down low at your feet, and gaze
At your great beauty kindling in the flame,
With all the vaporous glooms about your head.
Ah, I grow humble in this happiness,
Your slave! But first, my despot, knot the smile,
The rare smile of your lips, into a kiss.
Queen At my lips' leisure. I shall dream to-night
O' my babe asleep at Stirling. I would fain
Lay the boy in your keeping: we will plot
To-morrow how to make the claim on Mar.
Bothwell Still ice these hands.
Queen I have been much distempered
Of late—Will you not chafe them?—With no loyal,
True-hearted friend to be my counsellor.
O Hepburn, ill-suspicion drives me mad;
I could not toss an apple to my child
But they must snatch it from him. Lethington
Does not support me; I can find no way
Of pleasing my vexed subjects.
Bothwell (*Rising*) I could name you
A score of Scotland's weightiest, bonded men
To force you into marriage.
Queen They are traitors.
Is it to save me from them you pursued
This morn your rough, unwarrantable course?
Bothwell 'Tis to enact their policy. At supper

One night at Ainslie's tavern I was host
To the good houses that acquitted me,
Moray, Argyle, Huntly and Cassilis—
You know the faction—Eglinton slipped off:
We fell to loyal drinking of your health,
Praise of your beauty, and Lord Huntly swore
I was your darling; ay, my mermaid, so
They painted you, with the eyes' furious flash,
Across the banner where with double thong
You beat the hounds off from your hunted love.
Your face confirms conjecture. To be brief,
My merry mates signed this. (*Presenting the Bond*)

Queen (*Overlooking the page*) Not Eglinton . . .
Morton and Moray.—Where is Maitland's name?
We will consider these ill-worded clauses,
Conceived in wantonness, and, as our judgment
Directs, yield them response. Release my hand!
It was the earl's; I give no drunken suitor
Such privilege. (*She rises and goes to a window*)

Bothwell Affix your signature,
And then, the business of the day at end,
I will retire.

Queen (*Looking out*) There are no stars to-night;
I simply catch the roaring of the sea
When I look out. I used to call my mother
On nights like these—I was a timid child—
Till she refused to come, and bid me lie
And trust in God. I have learnt confidence;

No fear is in my soul.

Bothwell Sign me the bond.

Queen No, no; 'tis for my bosom,
A casket letter, a most precious scroll;
Let me peruse it fully. One by one
I shall learn all my enemies by name;
Never will I be parted from this bond,
This drunken, crazy prayer, this publican
And rank solicitation. Give me leisure . . .
My husband haunted taverns.

Bothwell You were best
Call me your husband also—You look calm,
And smooth your ruffled laces while I speak—
Let us forget him! Come, let's clink the cups!
What is it scares you? There shall be a parson
To put us in the noose. I mean to rule:
Jane Gordon knows my tactics—a divorce
Grounded on our affinity; meanwhile . . .

Queen (*Descending from the window, where she has stood, reading the bond*) Will you bring candles; there is this to read;
'Tis a state-paper and of much concern.
No, put the wine away; my head is giddy;
I must be vigilant: set me a taper.
I shall be busy till the morning break;
Then come to me; you will find all prepared.
(*Apart*) Oh, trust me, I will tell a score of lies
To save him from this infamy.—I feel

A promptness and despatch. What, faint again!
You should have kept my women, for I fear
This sickness may be fatal.
Bothwell (*Supporting her*) Give me leave.
Marie, these tears upon me!
Queen Nay, good-night.
I have no malice being nigh to death.
How strange it is! Are all the hangings black?
You used to love gay tapestry.
Bothwell My queen,
Your mind is wandering; you need food and rest.
I swear I will not pester you; be calm,
Sleep safe till daybreak.
Queen Then the warders come
And open. Ay, you asked me for a kiss.
Goodnight, good earl. (*She kisses him*)
Bothwell My pardon!
Queen If I die,
All's fresh with morning. I must presently
Con this untoward paper. Leave me, earl;
You have no head for crises.
Bothwell (*Slowly retiring and glancing back doubtfully*)
A great figure!
How all her youth is gone—I scarce desire her,
Sick and enfeebled; and the touch of scorn.
If she should circumvent me! We are both
In hell, which is but unfulfilment, power
Looking across a waste. *Exit*

Queen Throughout the night
No change of posture—I must weary him
With court formalities and Europe's front:
So dies the girl in me. Ah, God, I would
I were in Holyrood to close this breach
I' my honour by the headsman. Violence, threats!
What is there more to suffer? The young sea-mews
Wheel free about their nests, and, if they fall,
Dash bloody in the spray. I fear no ruin
That's sudden and precipitous—The bond!

(*She lays it out before her; then falls into a fit of abstraction; her head bows over her hands, and she sleeps*)

SCENE VIII—*Dunbar: ante-chamber to the room in which the* QUEEN *is captive*

Enter BOTHWELL

Bothwell She leans her ear for ever toward the bridge
Across which press the armaments of wind,
But no leal rescue. I importuned her
Seven blank and awful days, until I breathed
Within a vacuum; the estrangement grew
So heavy, insupportable, I fain
Had murdered her to crush the anguish out,
But then I knew her smile would welcome death,

And leave me stunned and jealous. Once indeed
She flooded me with a wide gaze of love
Dazzling, forlorn: and I beholding it
Could make no sign,—it was as if a damned,
A new-damned soul had caught God's agony
At sight of the impenetrable fosse.
Since then I have not plagued her. Horrible
This lonesomeness, abandon! I have wandered
Two days among the gullies on the coast,
And watched the embattled breakers bursting through
Their narrow, counter archways in the rocks,
To heave together in a central mound
Of foam, then fall back in a refluent peace.
A stormy clash of marriage! Why this harass,
Withdrawal and exclusion? In her heart
She keeps the bounties of her nature guarded
For my attainment, yet suppresses them,
Wronging herself, polluting me. I never
Will take what is a rapture in the gift;
But force the tardy welcome in her blood
To speak truth to me, for there is a truth
Between us: I have lived on it from day
To stormy daybreak.

(*To* PARIS *who has entered with food and wine*)

Paris, go within;
Say I have fallen from the cliff, and lie
Below stark in the courtyard. Do my will,
And leave the door flung open.

(PARIS *passes within*)
(*Listening and repeating the* QUEEN'S *words*) *He is dead!*
How shall I wait the issue? There is pause,
And then a fond, low sobbing, and a cry—
(*Springing to the open doorway*) My love, my love!

ACT V.

SCENE I—*Holyrood; a distant apartment:* MARY SETON *and* MARY LIVINGSTONE

Mary Seton She is changed
As the dead change the morning and the eve
Of the first day. I bent to take her hood,
When we received her at the Castle-gate
After her guarded journey from Dunbar,—
Then dropped my hands and left her.
Mary Livingstone Noisily
The earl dismissed us, with his truculent
And frowning carriage. Fast he drove his business,
And, being new-divorced from Lady Jane,
Announced himself the bridegroom of our queen,
With threats compelled the kirk to read their banns;
Then spent two straining hours of trouble lost
To win the English queen's ambassador
To look upon their union; at the council
He sat as king—
Mary Seton Our mistress puts her hand
To any paper, will remit and pardon
The worst offences with a face as dull
And unconcerned as if men's good and evil

Were one to her.

Mary Livingstone My rebel eloquence
Has kept the palace ringing with her wrong;
Traquair and Erskine listen with a blush
Across their brows, and Lady Lethington
Hints there will be deliverance. Could I fan you
Into my flame!

Mary Seton I saw her first again
When late in afternoon she made him Duke
Of Orkney and the Shetlands, on the vigil
Of her reputed marriage-day. She gave
Her head a sportive and capricious arch,
As she were playing queenship and no queen;
Yet, when he entered, with a heaving bosom
She kept her ground so regnantly he bent
Irresolute, subjected.

Mary Livingstone He is careful
To show the deference of bonnet off:
She laughs, I verily believe she laughs
When he uncovers.

Mary Seton But the marriage-day!
There is no midnight in these summer nights;
It was not one o'clock when I awoke
To dress her for the dismal rites of dawn;
And, thridding the white darkness to her door,
Swung open 'gainst the bed, I found her wrapt
In her black widow's weeds from head to foot,
But yet apparelled in a sort of joy

That frightened me. *To-day there will be feast*
I broke out, prompted to the erring word:
Then she, the strangeness in her eyes and lips
Of one who is admonished to his death,
Answered, *To-day there is no festival.*
Where the tree falleth, Marie, it must lie;
It falls to northern dolour, stricken north—
Inclining south, to life and blessedness.
Thus in no jewels but her shining tears
She passed to her mock marriage.
Mary Livingstone Worst of all
Was her consent to marry Protestant,
With preaching, not the mass.
Mary Seton She took no heed
Of anything they said, and when the sermon
Was ended, as a creature from its sleep
Rises to wander through the night, with eyes
Vacant, unflickering, fearful, she stood up,
And paced of her own motion through the door.
No games nor any pastime! Not a flower
Was gathered to breathe forth its parable
Of Hymen's hours o'maying. Nature seemed
To turn aside, man to recoil, and time
To slight the circumstance. The very stars
Shone round the sky like candles at a wake.
Could you have borne it?
Mary Livingstone Not as she has done;
But then she is a queen, and by surrender

She saves her title's honour—so was lofty
Through all the farce, and, withering at its rites,
She yet adorned them. How these Protestants
Have wrecked her like an abbey, and enslaved
Her altar to their schism, and yet she draws
Around such blasphemies compulsive grace
Lent by the true religion. Policy,
Great pride, and custom—not her conscience—vouched
This marriage; it will be annull'd, and then,
Sweet name-fellow, we two shall find a place
Beside her first approachable distress,
So much we love her still.

Mary Seton So much? Ah, more,
With sorer love. If I might take her soul
And shroud it tight forever from her God!
He must not see her tarnish.—And these things
Are prattle of the court.

Mary Livingstone Our earls and nobles
Troop northward to the cradle of the prince,
And arm themselves at Stirling.

Mary Seton There is wrath
That does not move abroad as vengeance doth,
But perfects wickedness until it drop:
'Tis so she must be loosened of her curse.

SCENE II—*Holyrood; the* QUEEN'S *bed-chamber: the door is ajar, she overhears talk in the audience-chamber*

Bothwell (*Within*) Fellows, have any passed to her?
Erskine (*Within*) The queen
Has been retired all day, and white beyond
Her girlhood's famous white. Her eyes look ill.
Bothwell The devil! what ado about her health;
She is a very plague. I'll visit her,
When I have spoken further with the guard. (*Silence*)
Queen Can love be terror? I am almost sure
That hate can love . . . I feel it in myself.
God, keep my hatred single, let me be
A desolated woman, and my life
Like a burnt city salted by the foe;
Let not one leaf or blade be visible
This Maytime in my calendar! The man,
I loathe and wed, is growing dear as sin,
Precious as was my wrath the vengeful night
Of Riccio's murder, and beloved as are
Mere passions in their transit. He has handled
My soul unlawfully in forcing me,
His victim, to turn wife; yet very death
Withdrawing from my neighbourhood swift means
For its extreme of safety, joined with him
To work a second outrage, and to plant
His stain across my will. But more than this . . .

I have a fear; a monstrous hopelessness
Makes vision red before me. It was born
Of his embrace: I cannot now believe
That in his nature there is innocence,
Not any . . . Oh, I must not bide alone,
With this conception out upon the air.
(*Calling*) Erskine!

Erskine (*At the door*) Dear madam.

Queen Why is this?

Erskine You called.

How lone you grow—one waiting-woman, scarce
A courtier, every passage and apartment
Ranged with steel arquebusiers. Are you free
As you declared, sweet queen?

Queen You find I am.
No bolt across the door!

Erskine I have not long
In which to speak my faith to you, who are
Beauty and consecration to my life;
But if my service could afford you comfort
'Tis yours, though all yon shifting points of iron
Were level to my heart.

Queen (*Apart*) Then shall I ask
For knife or sudden poison? Futile prayer!
For well I know he keeps me out of death
By fascinating blandishment, that has
The tiger in it, yet man's faithfulness,
And will not end, nor let me fail—until

God loose me of his mercy from the charm.
(*To* ERSKINE) I thank you, brave esquire, for your confession
Of youth's devoutness, such as makes the spring
Show reverence to the twilight, offering all
Its sun-born, crescent virtues, and sweet breath
In eve's dim presence. I accept your vows,
Your constancy, your warmth with these dropped tears,
The bounty of my gratitude.
Erskine Last year,
You had fresh eyes, and smiles that did not know
That they were in your face. It sends me mad
When splendour changes, and I almost turn
Apostate to my youth.
Queen I heard the duke?
Erskine He went to charge the guardsmen. But you called:
Madam, you lack some office?
Queen Ah!—a draught
Of water pure and cold.
Erskine Not wine?
Queen No, no!
(*Apart*) For when I drink the goblet he has filled
The vintage dyes my fancies.
Erskine I will hasten
To bring a fountain-cup. *Exit*
Queen Tell me, Traquair,
If the duke mounts, for he has promised me

His presence by this hour. (TRAQUAIR *comes to her door*)
Traquair Lady, my faith!
I hear him swearing roundly in the court,
A growl full-formed.
Queen I did not ask for this.
Traquair Yea, if I heard him. He would spread a field
With thunder in his passion.
Queen Sir, your tongue
Is master of your breeding.
Traquair Pardon me,
I am too rash, and your displeasure is
A curb that makes me shiver.
Queen I have left
A black hood on my daïs. Will you fetch it.
(TRAQUAIR *goes into the audience-chamber*)
For I must put it out of sight; he tore
My sable widow-raiment from my bosom
Some days ago, that I should wear this dress
Of harsh and flaunting scarlet. (TRAQUAIR *brings the hood*) Thanks, my knight!
(*Apart*) A stormy noise of steps, a door! My nerves
Fly to some hole or cover . . . but retreat
Is earthed up by his presence.

Enter BOTHWELL.

Bothwell Who is here?
Why do you coy it with this lad? I ordered

Your vile and hellish mourning to your chest,
Until you please to put it on for me.
(*As if recollecting* TRAQUAIR'S *presence*)
Pardon, my sovereign lady. Do not visit
My rudeness with desert. Some deep concerns
Weight me till you give judgment. (*To* TRAQUAIR)
Leave the queen,
And see you keep your distance. Do you hear?
Traquair Yes, my lord duke.
Queen (*Softly*) Obey him.
Exit TRAQUAIR
(BOTHWELL *slams the door after him and turns gloomily to the* QUEEN. *A knocking is heard*)
Bothwell Who will dare
Knock at this door, I wonder. (*Opens to* ERSKINE) Get you off!
Intrude upon our privacy again
You answer with your life.
Erskine But I was sent
By madam for this goblet.
Bothwell (*Recollecting himself, seizing his cap and bowing to the* QUEEN) It is fitting
You do her service. Give the vessel here,
And keep your distance as your fellow does.
Erskine I am a gentleman . . .
Queen Sir Arthur, go.
Exit ERSKINE, *with a deep bow to the* QUEEN
Bothwell Inconstant, as this water! You must fondle

Your equerry to bring it! By all devils,
You shall be plagued like thirsty Tantalus.
(*Dashing it on the floor*)
Cannot you rule your people, make your mobs
Obedient to my hand, instead of teaching
These amorous youngsters to be insolent!
I am half-mad with burthens. (*Pacing frantically*) Sold, deserted,
Mocked and withstood, I have been made the dupe
Of mentionless deceit.

Queen (*Apart*) Within his eyes
What dreary menace!—Tell me of your grief.

Bothwell And you false too. I know it by the way
You tempt these boys and let them wheel about
Your presence, damn you! They have courtly skins
And I these wound-creased brows. Death! I believed
I had a grasp like fate, and everything
Is slipping into limbo: first my state,
My coadjutors, and my squadrons vanish,
And then my queen slips like a phantom-shape
Of mist to others' bosoms.

Queen (*Wringing her hands*) Would that God
Knew I was not your slave! I burn to share
Your molten sorrows.

Bothwell O my hand-fast wife,
Are you then heart-fast too?

Queen I cannot say
What ties me to your will, that, like a horse,

Sweeps me through unknown empires. I should faint
To nothingness unless it governed me.
What must I do to help you?
Bothwell Every one,
Oath-bound to join with me, is splitting off;
The folk are sullen; I have made them sports,
Shown them my deeds of arms, and you have watched
As if I were your rock of lode-stone, ever
A claim upon your sight: yet still they grumble.
There is but this to cheer them—you must sign
A revocation of all licenses
To use the Roman worship. You and I
Are Protestants . . . so lift no hesitation
Upon your lips to vex me. Take the pen,
And write your signature. (*Giving her a deed*)
Queen (*Turning to a table mechanically and with despair*)
(*Apart*) No, holy Saints,
I cannot listen to your keen addresses—
This marriage-ring is seated on my hand;
It is too late to chide me. He has taken
The honour of my spirit, my religion;
I can forswear apostacy no more
Than rid my finger from its hoop of doom.
(*She signs and hands the deed to him*)
There, James; I almost fancy me a witch,
With Satan for my master. (*She laughs hollowly*)
Bothwell (*Kissing her*) Done, brave heart!
Now let me have your child to keep and guard,

Or the false lords will seize him.
Queen (*Recoiling fiercely*) You have cast me
On nature, taken all my sacraments;
On nature I will stand, and as a mother
Be there invincible. You shall not have him.
Bothwell What do you mean?
Queen I have no force of thought
To understand it—I who have dissevered
My own, dear sapling from my breast.
Bothwell The rebels
Will put the crown upon him, and convey
To him your royalties.
Queen They all are his;
He has my blood within him, and my milk
Has bred him for a crownet.
Bothwell O kneel down,
And do as Popish Mary to the Christ,
Acknowledge him your king.
Queen My womanhood
Has often prayed before him; but the chrism,
The consecrating oil of sovereignty
Forbids it to his queen.
Bothwell You go the way
To make me hate him, and you cannot measure
What hatred were in me, because your eyes
Transform its dull rock to a jewelled passion
With but one glance of light—Your bairn, however,
With fool-begotten stare, could fetch no kindness

Out of my detestation.

Queen Oh, a sword,
A knife to end this bitterness, or else
Within St. Margaret's pool, so cold with winds,
To drown myself! You cannot hinder me,
If you dismay the wild, maternal pulse
Past nature's own insanity.—A sword!

Erskine (*Within*) Her cry at violence; what a haunting scream!
Help, beat the door down!

Traquair (*Within*) I shall hold you here.
He is her husband.

Bothwell (*Apart*) I have heard of storms
In which an unimpeded wind has stretched
The frantic sea-waves level, while it cries
Above the soundless plane: she sweeps my will,
My wrath down into silence.

Queen (*Coming near to him*) Have you thought
What utter hatred would be like in *me?*
How in my eyes it were a basilisk
Of frightful charm, and in my voice the song
Of syren from her seat among the bones?
Have you beheld the vision? Very soon
It will be actual, and face to face.

Bothwell Ha!—Turn away! You do not understand
I pressed a policy, no despot whim—
A threat to make you reasonable—that

Was all my hot intent. The lords henceforth
Will rally round your son, anoint him king,
And leave you like the altar of the mass
In a purged Romish church; but if you rather
Will bear such violation than resist,
I cannot help it, and will never ask
To have your child again, although your madness
Should ruin our linked government.

Queen You promise?

Bothwell The devil seize you! What tormenting power
Is in your motions! But you cannot see,
For all your deep endowment, that this clash
Of quarrel strikes me haggard. By our God,
I swear to keep my peace about the boy:
Mar would not give him up. You wrong my aim;
On me you look adversely with an anger
Imperative, primæval, yet unjust
As it is blind and senseless. Houri-love,
My martial, witching star, if you should fail me,
I am alone and worsted. O bend down;
These raging tears fall over you.

Queen Nay, nay!
What would you have?

Bothwell Your pity, your approach—
Pardon!

Queen A fellow anguish, as of rain
Meeting the torrent-sea has brought my head,

Where it now rests. (*Sobbing on his shoulder*) James,
do not ask forgiveness;
Between us by no possibility
There now can be exchange.
Bothwell At least your lips,
My queen!
Queen You need not ask—I am a ruin,
Your wishes pierce wherever they may list.
Leave me to sleep. My lord, I must not taste
This great, salt weeping as you kiss me.
Bothwell So
We end this great unkindness.
Queen Ay, even so.
(*As he goes to the doorway of the private stair, he passes by the neighbouring tapestry*)
Bothwell Phaeton's red-harnessed horses, grey as doom,
And he himself 'mong their tumultuous hoofs . . .
Such picture by her bedside! He who owned
This stairway's rights before me fell in chaos:
I tread where he did, leaving her. What Fury
Set up this woful *Gobelin!* *Exit*
Queen When I hear
His feet within the turret, my whole frame
Remembers by degrees, and yet to-day
Perchance my doubts were false and passionate

SCENE III—*Holyrood; a room in the palace:* LETHINGTON *is discovered writing despatches*

Enter LADY LETHINGTON

Lethington Well, Mary, will her grace be pleased to sign these despatches?

Lady Lethington I know not: you have the dreariest brows.

Lethington For I love her infinitely; this is the last service I shall render her. It is plain I must resign my stewardship and away to everlasting habitations!

Lady Lethington What do you mean? You will not die? I am sure you are ill; for you lie awake all night without stirring. I must conclude you are ill.

Lethington Do you conceive it possible to secure rest in a palace tramped by barbarians? I tell you, Mary, the voice of that homicide . . .

Lady Lethington Then you imagine he is the king's murderer?

Lethington Tush, child, that were a small matter: he makes onslaught on the delicate fabric of the mind; he invades the region of alternatives and possibilities, and crushes the tender shoots of inclination. I have not a brain to bear predatory impairment. Sweet wife, there were gentler housing for thy sick spouse at Stirling.

Lady Lethington What! You will not leave the queen?

Lethington Ay, haply for the moment, for the quieting of my country, and the re-knitting of my mind.

Lady Lethington You are not faithful?

Lethington The chameleon, my pretty moralist, is faithful to the light through variance—its susceptibility changes its dyes. Faithful to what?

Lady Lethington To be faithful is to be fixed and constant. To be faithful in religion is to have ever the same mind toward God.

Lethington The fidelity of an imbecile! I must love my God humanly, not with stiff constancy, but with every mood I have—not a single devout strain—but with jealousy, contrition, humbleness, and pride. Shall we give all our heart to a mortal, and a few notes of piety to our God? But your pardon, my rigorous philosopher; I demand of you nothing better than the observance of your own maxims. It is the glory of a woman to maintain the creed of her espousals. How prospers the royal honey-moon upstairs?

Lady Lethington Most unhappily, to judge by the queen's countenance. But she will not lose her senses, as 'tis reported. It is the duke who blocks up the passage, and lets his hands drop. (BOTHWELL *is heard tramping above*)

Lethington He is insufferable—do but listen!—the confusion of palaces. Mary, heaven arm thee with thy lord's fell eloquence to bring down the queen.

Lady Lethington I am ever your servant to perform your behests. Your kisses are the bribe of my obedience.

You seek to make me an unhappy wife, that my fortunes may equal those of my mistress.

Lethington Nay, my spouse, you are mated with wisdom, and the price of wisdom is above rubies. Be not malcontent. Go, urge the queen. The ambassadors start for England to-night. It may be I too shall be absent. (*Kissing her*) God be with you, dear.

Exit LADY LETHINGTON

(*Turning to the despatches*) The last service I shall perform for her! The duke had slain me yesterday, but for her intervention. I must leave her; it is the beginning of my great attachment. Farewell to ideas, dreams, policies; farewell to unity! The heir to the English kingdom should be full of all comely conditions, and she hangs as a blanched leaf on a bough. Yet it pierces me to the heart to note how she keeps her queenship to me as I were the single loyal subject in the world. Could she recover! She must bide somewhere in prison (*shrugging his shoulders as he hears more noise*) till we get that barbarian hanged. Afterwards . . . No, there is no restoration possible; but I shall but seem to abandon her. I am cursed by the tenacity of my affections. When I was a boy they set me to keep watch over the dead. It was a duty without issue; and there is in me a fund of patience for a sort of posthumous religion.

Enter the QUEEN

(*She takes a pen and bends over the despatches*)

Queen I do not ask

How you have told the truth of these last days
You have had vision of.
Lethington (*Apart*) She need not lower
Her lids, her wide, brimmed eyes are reticent;
And yet there is expansion on the lips
And brows—that luminous, poetic shine,
The presage of some great impolicy.
Queen (*Putting away the despatches*) Ay, I have signed
them all; if dreamily,
Forgive me: for a peace comes down and softens
My sorrows when I dream. How bare the world
Would be without the dead!
Lethington Of whom, dear queen,
May you be taking thought?
Queen I think no more
Of one or two; they come in multitudes
Within me, down the currents of my blood;
And the great, outer host drawn in with breath.
There is no time in them; it is alike
If they fell ages back, or yesterday;
And Helen, shadowed by Ægyptus' shore,
Moves close to me; she clasps Theonoë
About the neck, and through the lotus-flowers
The women press together.
Lethington Ay, the phantom,
Not the live Helen.
Queen She who was a queen.
I love the legend that she never swerved

From wifely faith, that Paris' capture was
A spectre that dislimned into thin air
When Proteus from his shadow in the rocks
Rose, and restored his guarded fugitive
Unblemished to her husband. All those years
Of bloodshed and reproach she had been held
In sanctuary, and where her soul received
No sound of her ill-fame. It seems to me
One may be so withdrawn, even from the clamour
Of those who love and fight and suffer wrong
For the poor image of oneself, the clay,
Not the live creature, Lethington. I seek
To give you apprehension of the facts
That have been open to your ken these last
Tumultuous weeks—for you have still your queen
Preserved by mystic charity from taint
Of noisome accident, and overcome
Of none, being so secluded in herself,
Storms have no access to her.

Lethington Can you doubt,
My sovereign, that my deepest faith is yours,
Though to pursue your pretty simile,
I hold the lovely Greek so deep in awe,
That when I see her injurers, almost
I perish of pure passion, as the elms,
Planted about Protesilaus' tomb,
Faded as fast as their aspiring shoots
Caught glimpse of Ilium.

Queen Hush, that red Dunbar.
(*Taking his hands and clasping them*) How many years
You were my mother's counsellor; how oft
By luring *sagesse* you have drawn me back
From folly: you can aid me now no more.
Wide ruin overhangs. 'Tis pitiful
To bear a name that in its overthrow
Carries fair kingdoms, and leaves tremulous
The pillars of the church: I bear such name,
I front such ominous fortune. Put away
These papers; it is plain that we must part:
God will not suffer me one comfort now.
I cannot see you murdered in my sight;
Therefore you must be gone. Yet stay awhile—
(*Taking an ornament from her neck*) I have an oval ornament of gold,
Enamelled with a curious device
From Æsop's fable of the netted lion,
And his most nimble-toothed deliverer;
With these Italian words: *non mancano*
Le forze a chi basto l' animo
Written around it. I have often sighed,
Touching the trinket, ere I laid it by—
For see, the violet cord is worn with use—
O'er this entoiled, forsaken royalty,
And the persistent, liberating force
Beside it. Should there ever be occasion
For breaking the captivity, return

This gift; my cipher graven within its lid
Is pregnant as a pass-word to my love,
And closer than a signet. You have never
Signed any the vile bonds my enemies
Have published in their hate: receive this token
Of grace and benediction from your queen.

Lethington Madam, this golden outbreak fron the cloud . . .

Queen My courtier! I shall lose so soon the voice
Whose every invocation was a spell,
And yet must break its music. We shall talk
No more together. Though I were content
To lie and let the waves fall over me,
As a wrecked barque that, when the storm is spent,
Suffers the soft mishandling of the tides,
I still am treasurer of the crown. How fares
My boy? You have much intercourse with Mar;
The lords are gathered in a camp at Stirling
Around his cradle.

Lethington Have but patience, madam,
You too shall be delivered.

Queen How is this?
It doth not need conspiracy to quench
Ambition such as his, so dissolute.
(*Throwing herself on a seat and passionately weeping*)
I cannot banish him; he would return.

Lethington Ay, the light, spectral way of guilty souls:

You have your rosary.

Queen It will be pastime
To count my beads on the dark swards of hell.
Maitland, my soul is ciphered Catholic,
And yet I have withdrawn the licences
At the duke's pleasure. I am slight of will.

Enter BOTHWELL

Leave us till dinner-time.

Bothwell (*Advancing*) What, closeted
With Lyd, your secretary—an old offence!
You shall not have another faithful servant
Like David Riccio. Ah, you whiten, sir.

Lethington It is my wont at blasphemy. Proceed!
Are these for my revision? (*Attempting to take some papers from* BOTHWELL)

Bothwell (*Grasping them*) I have writ
Brief record of my mind and purposes
To England. I can front Elizabeth
As you; I do not need your artifice.
(*Turning to the* QUEEN)
O Marie, would you see a borderer
Expend his hate, at last fall to the feast
Of long, unsated, devilish detestation?
(*Relaxing his hold at the* QUEEN'S *intercession*)
Nay then, he shall be spared; but since you cast
On me your ravishment, and since you turn
The dun side of your beauty to my face,

Setting the wind of your hot sighs to blast
My rash, desirous moments, since you thwart me,
And magnify this pard—I will unfold
The smooth and cowardly creature you esteem.
This man heard Morton promise me your hand,
And to and fro he journeyed prospering
My heady plans; he is the sorcerer
To lure your mates to death, one after one;
He sits, and sees them drop away from you,
But yet he meddles not. Now chat together;
He will advise you how you may entoil
A second victim. I will leave you now. *Exit*

Queen To think that you were with me at Dunbar!

Lethington You saved my life.

Queen (*Looking toward the door*) He cannot be a king;
They wither, or are murdered, or grow mad
Who link themselves with me in sovereignty.
Twilight and ruin settle on us both!
Oh, might we be forgotten; could we lie
In the blank pardon of oblivion! That,
Alack, can never be; there is no man
Can give me safety, or protection, or
Peace from vicissitude; I have no lover,
Servant or friend; and yet I am beloved
Even to marvel. I can pray no more,
I have no more dependence upon God;
And none on any of His creatures, none.
Go, tell my story as you learnt it, add

New matter. If I sat beside the fire,
In prison with my maids, and never spoke,
While you put forth fresh libels, or confirmed
The common talk, you could not injure me:
My silence would have privilege.
Lethington Your pardon;
My task is now to write an epitaph:

Here lies a royal lady who defamed
Each soul that did her service, unashamed;
And loved to raise the vicious to such grace
That heaven and hell were centred in one place.

So I unclasp my shackles. (*Unclasping the ornament*)
Queen (*Looking steadfastly at* LETHINGTON) By consent
He seized me at Dunbar? The Tolbooth gauged
The pressure of my passions; and the cartels
Will pass me truly to posterity,
While you admit the portrait?
Lethington Libellers
Are sure of popularity. My brain
Treasures a rare, untarnished miniature;
With that I shall not part. (*She gazes at him, sobbing*)
Nay, pardon now,
Full pardon, great, obliterating sea,
Of love o'erwhelm me! You have heaven's own measure:
The seventy-times-and-seven is in your eyes,
Immeasurable grace. There is no need

Of this slave's token; but I put it back.
(*Kissing the gold ornament*)
God shield you from dishonour! May He draw
Blood of me, when my life has other use
Than to protect your titles.
Queen It was thus
I dreamed of you. Farewell.

SCENE IV—*Borthwick; the battlements, with a courtyard below*

Enter on to the battlements BLACKADDER *and the* CASTELLAN

Blackadder This flight from Holyrood, because 'twas mooted
The lords were on the march, is argument
To sure disaster.
Castellan Though the duke is gone
Among the border ridges to collect
An army at Melrose, I have no faith
That he can draw the commons after him;
For her black weeping has estranged men's hearts
Acutely from his service.
Blackadder She is restless
As any creature that has lost its mate,
Since he has left her side: she does not sleep,
Nor sit, nor feed, nor use her supple hands

In needlework or music, but grows thin
With pacing, and distempered meditation.
Crookstan, this fidget of a woman's soul
Sets me distraught. I cannot understand
The weeping and constraint of her behaviour
At Holyrood, and this sharp pining now.
She hates him or she loves him: but which horn
Of this dilemma she is pitched upon
No son of woman knows.

Castellan Hold! Here she comes,
Untended 'mid that gaiety of dress
She flaunts in since he took her. *Exit* BLACKADDER

Enter QUEEN

Queen Castellan,
Are troops in sight? The twilight thwarts mine eyes.

Castellan There is a rumour that the earls of Mar,
Morton, Montrose, are pressing to our keep
With Lindsey, Hume.

Queen (*Stamping impatiently*) In answer to my summons?

Castellan Madam, your proclamation is as waste.

Queen I look forth on a kingdom that is mine,
Yet stand here helpless as a country-lass.
Peace, peace! Bring me an army. Scan the space;
Is there no moving colour on the verge?

Castellan I have been out twice to the mound and shouted;

The hills were deaf—it is an evil sign.
(*Moving to the other side*)
Queen If I should pray!
Below there is soft frolic in the fields,
Summer and grassy harvest. God, instead
Plant me an army for his marshalling;
Remount his courage, lest the last disdain
Come o'er me, tempting me to fling him off!

Enter the MARIES.

How now! What, women, treble voices—tush!
Well, girls, your service? Are there no relays?
You have sharp, shining eyes: look to the west.
Mary Livingstone Madam, we come to alter your attire;
For if the duke . . .
Queen O frippery! Your husbands should be grooms;
Break your lords' anger with a string of pearls!
Away with you, you puppets of the court!
There are no pages here to find delight
In your small modes. *Exeunt*
The leaflets of this rosebush
Are plucked away; how desperate I am!
Do I not hear his step? My ardours grow
With fear and with despair.

Enter BLACKADDER

Blackadder My lord returns,

Is solitary, changed, a very devil.
Leave us to brave him.

Queen But I never dread
The open air, the vehemence, the storm
Of a man's nature. (*Apart*) 'Tis his underground
Fidelity of force that holds me down,
As Plutus kept hell-closed Proserpina;
I should enjoy his rage.

Enter BOTHWELL: *he passes the* QUEEN *without notice and stares over the country*

Blackadder (*To* CASTELLAN) Look there!
(*Pointing to* BOTHWELL)

Castellan My God! (*A deep pause*)

Blackadder (*To* CASTELLAN) Is not that movement to the north a band
Of riders?

Castellan Slip round by the other side;
So let us reach the stair. I may not venture
To question our commander, but I think
Some peril is approaching. Come away.

Blackadder (*Watching the* QUEEN *and* BOTHWELL)
They stand against that cloud as still as towers
Stand through the night.

(BLACKADDER *and the* CASTELLAN *pass round the further battlement, and the* CASTELLAN *descends; as* BLACKADDER *is descending* BOTHWELL *turns*)

Bothwell Tell them to make my bed.
Blackadder Yes, yes, my lord.
Bothwell Strip all the covers off;
'Tis hot.
Blackadder My lord, I will. *Exit*
BOTHWELL *continues to gaze out, and takes no notice of the* QUEEN
Queen (*Apart*) It is not safe
To guard this solitude. (*Aloud*) What, *perdu*, love—
So weary and dishevelled? You are dumb
And trembling . . . . (*Apart*) Still no answer. All the world
Becomes a silence. Stars, stars, break the heat
With some swift declaration; nightingale,
Sing through your gurgling blood to us!
Bothwell (*Suddenly moving to the stair*) I'll go,
I will be off to couch me.
Queen (*As he passes*) Are you ill?
Bothwell Damned by your love. Ha, ha, I have been king
A month or so, have swayed it in good earnest,
And made my queen my vassal. 'Tis all done!
I have had royal quarters . . . At Melrose
There is no army. I have torn the crown
In haste to seize it, pulled the throne on me;
But when I sit and whistle on my prow . . .
Queen James, James, you dare not leave me?
Bothwell Those famed eyes

Have learned to make entreaty to my will.
When I sit whistling on my prow at sea,
Among my buccaneers, I shall make boast—
Of what, my sovereign dame?

(*The* QUEEN *starts towards the battlements' edge;* BOTHWELL *violently pushes her back against the roof*)

Oh, you have courage!
Your old trick at Dunbar,—it awed me then.
You cannot give me pleasure any more
With your stained, dripping face. 'Tis over, girl,
This play at kings and queens. Will you not come
Aboard with me? I had a Danish wife,
Whom I left stranded on the Netherlands
When she had served my turn. Your resolution?
Ay, handy-dandy with me, up and down—
I will not be your jailor; you are free:
The lords are gathering for your rescue: open,
Let them burst in and murder me. To-night
I'll sleep—destruction!—sleep with open window,
And let all go to rack. *Exit*

Queen Within my head
There is a clang as if great gates of iron
Shook, and then opened to a breeze. My limbs
Quaver as do the hill-curves in the heat.
Nothing is altered—only he is gone,
Oppressive in his insolence and gross
As manhood is when it descends beneath

A woman's foot. Darnley and Lethington
And Moray—so I have been taught contempt
From note to note: the compass now is reached;
I cannot stretch beyond to-day the limit
Of scorn, for it is full and perfect, striking
This man I reckoned faithful as the seasons,
My horoscope, or death. A loosed possession!
And I am *that*—cast off with lack of love
By an insensate hand! O God, the light
That pours unblinking inward—and how large
A difference in my heart!

Enter CASTELLAN *and* BLACKADDER *in the courtyard below*

Castellan (*To* BLACKADDER) Go fetch my lord;
A troop without say they are hunted friends,
And I must open.
Blackadder He is laid a' bed,
Or just undressing. I shall have a thud
Of passion for my message.
Castellan Go. *Exit* BLACKADDER
Queen (*Listening*) A tumult
Against the bank!

Re-enter below BOTHWELL *and* BLACKADDER

Blackadder Your doublet is not on.
Bothwell Curses! I'll not be touched—Just pull this down—

Where is that madman Crookstan? Blast your wits!
Lock, lock and hold! It is a stratagem.
Fool, must I slumber to be caught alive
For durance through your softness? All is up!
We have no food or arms to meet a siege,
Scarcely a dozen men within the walls
For sortie or repulse.
Cries (*Outside the gates*) Assassin, out!
Butcher, come forth! (*Confused execrations*)
Bothwell I have not one resolve.
(*Apart*) The mast is broken, and the striving sail
Falls down it in a heap. There is such rage
Of hopeless circumstance about my ears,
It desolates my force as if I heard
The water-kelpie howl—a sweating panic.
Had I but slept an hour!
Cries Ha, ha, come forth—
A murderer, a regicide!
Bothwell Confound
Their vile abuse, dishonourable noise!
Who would have thought this grey and silent hour
Would hoot outrageous titles, and besiege
My sense with clamour?
Castellan You will never let
Their ribald anger put you out of heart.
My lord, I wait directions.
Cries Ravisher!
Bothwell I cannot stay. Crookstan, I know all voices

That reach this earthly life of ours; the shout
Of battle and the predatory din,
Woman's soft-worded breath, the hurling stream
In flood and hate, the sorrow of the wind
When ghosts are in its tide—all, save this cry
Round a defenceless castle, round about
Our unprotected conscience. Send your son
To meet me at the postern.

Castellan For escape?

Bothwell For anything, for peace—I cannot stay,
Hedged in by such offence, *Exit* CASTELLAN
drawn on to flight
By something voiceful, and by such distraction
As turns all ways to menace me. Ay, yell
Below there in the pit! This midsummer,
Far sky is cavernous above my head,
Huge, full of wondrous passes through the stars:
It looked so from the hole at Lindisfarne
They put me in; and when I choke at night,
Wrung with a nightmare, 'tis not Kirk o' Field
That sets me gasping; but a low, arched room,
With iron trellis and a muffled door,
Where I must hold my breath till they have clamped
His bonds about a captive who begins
A fairy thrall of twenty thousand years! (*More cries*)
Howl up your execrations! Guilty, lords,
To every charge.

Cries Adulteress!

Bothwell Let alone
That cry, confounding *her* with my misdeeds.
She shall not hear it—infamy! (*Turning in the direction of the execrating lords*) To sweep
Across you as the north wind on the bents,
Clean from the verge to tear you in my transit,
Then boom triumphant of the scath behind!
A regicide, a *rex!* It bursts again—
Their shriek that whirrs and eddies like the cry
Of sea-fowl at the base.
Cries Come down to us;
Yield yourself prisoner!
Bothwell Ay, to be shut up
As a big, precious relic! If these men
Should act my vision on me, I would loose
My thoughts out in a wolfish multitude;
I would betray them.

Re-enter CASTELLAN

Crookstan, muffle me,
Push me along the passage; I am blind—
Your boy there? O the mountains! I am safe!
And yonder the wan water. Let us out. *Exeunt*
Queen (*Who has caught snatches of the talk below*)
Fidelity! But now he has no claim,
No share in any regal attribute;
He drops to the unsingled multitude

Of craven rebels. And I stand alone,
Full of great, mounting courage ; in my veins
The blood that buffets fortune and endures.
I will go wander forth into the night,
And breathe my freedom. I am free as air,
As Dian in the woods. I wedded him
By promises heretical and void
As is his heart who leaves me. Out, away,
I go, I go ! The wife of Hepburn slips
Into her boyish hose and doughty cloak
To disappear for ever. In the cots
Are faithful subjects, charitable hands :
My people love their pity-dealing queen,
The daughter of their goodman, whom they called
King o' the Commons merrily. I wish
Bad dreams had all such issue : I am light
As when I danced upon the palace-floors
In dearest France, and irresponsible
As when I strayed at Inchmahome. My youth
Rushes in front of memory ; all my pain,
My plight in fresh disguise, are smart as joy ;
And there is nature in me that persists
In hoping, loving ; for the rain and dew
I cry, for seed-time and the harvest-fields :
The dead, unsightly things that have been cast
By alien forces on me presently
Must disappear. I leap into my realm
Without a thought—God speed me ! *Exit*

SCENE V—*Crichton Muir; a wild, marish country, lighted by glow-worms, in the distance a saddled horse*

The QUEEN *enters, dressed as a cavalier, and throws herself on the grass*

I have lost,
Quite lost my way, and with it every grief.
Ah, here is freedom, here is quietness;
Myself's own mystery closes round my soul
Once more, and I am healed. I have no prayer,
Nor any hopes or fears. To penetrate
Still further on, to learn more of this June,
This deep, midsummer midnight! I have touched
The roses, and have felt the fanning wind:
There is a kingdom where these royalties
Are more than faintly dreamed. Oh, if what stirs
In sleep, what palpitates with blessedness,
Would carry me away in trancèd arms!
(*She puts her hands through the turf*)
I have no mind for death. What gaiety
There is across the banks—a showery track
Of glow-worms; the whole grass is full of them,
And on beyond they thicken toward the moor.
I can be very wakeful with delight,
And watch the change and flitting of these lamps,
The passing and re-passing to and fro,
A luminous, slow load. How heavily

One drags behind, and now they all are gone.
One, two—I cannot count them. (*She sleeps*)

* * * * * *

(*Waking*) Day-break—ho!
The hills are built again,
And yonder is a castle. God, it seems
The sullen country that I saw before,
As I had made an orbit in the dark,
And come round to my starting. Silently
The light is creeping through; from point to point
It passes and gives judgment: on the verge
The barren hills expose their solitude,
The marsh yields up its rank and heavy pools,
While at my feet these silky filaments (*Gathering sedges*)
Shake their untarnished tufts athwart the wind.
In this hard dawn I find no comforter;
It is too just, it spreads impartially,
Shooting no dazzling signature across
The wide, accessible, untrodden ways.
I cannot choose or wander any more,
I can but bow me to my misery,
And take the pensive journey of a spirit,
That walks from hollow torture to its tomb,
To clothe itself in flesh that shall receive,
Foster, prolong, diversify its pangs.
There is a tramp of footsteps.
(*Turning, she sees* BOTHWELL *close to her*)
Bothwell Marie!—What,

You wanton! But you flitted for my sake
Across the brae?

Queen No matter—for we meet.

Bothwell Ho, lad! This change of vesture almost might
Win manhood to adopt you; yet, my faith!
We have no room among our qualities
For wild, exciting pallor, and such gaze
As would make civil war within our sex,
If once admitted . . . . Why, there is a change—
Turn me your face!—there is a change beyond
The youngster's cap about your wrung-up hair,
The boots and spurs. I madden! If you mean
To punish me you could not use me worse
Than mumming in these clothes with face of sorrow,
And climax of strange loveliness that makes me
Half-dread you are a spirit in disguise,
And mine no more.

Queen Where are we, on what road?

Bothwell She wanders still. Black Castle stands to left
That hid me in my flight. Ah, you are changed!

Queen A terrible perfection has been growing
In every sense of good and pain I feel.
No wonder I turn lovelier—I am young,
Not adverse as the old are toward their griefs,
But lithe to chastening.

Bothwell Talk less foolishly.

My Thespian, O my buskined love, this stage,
This moor, is not for interludes. The foe
May any moment seize us. I was sick,
Short-tempered when we parted.
Queen You are wrong,
We did not say goodbye.
Bothwell O pardon!
Queen Whither
Does foredoom take us?
Bothwell Hasten to Dunbar
With me: then are you safe.
Queen Not to Dunbar!
Bothwell Why, 'tis the only refuge.
Queen (*Apart*) Back to Hell
God's power dismisses lost ones on the day
Of their accompt; back, back to Hell—Dunbar!
Bothwell You speak with half a voice and hollowly.
Come, you are not yourself and must be led;
I sweep my arm around your shoulders, boy!
I am the stronger man, and shall prevail
If you entice my sinews into work.
And yet the deepness of your eyes affrights,
And is unlawful. I forbid the folly
Which thus delays escape.
Queen Yes, I must come;
It is my sentence.
Bothwell What, you are offended?
Then let me kiss the frown away.

Queen No, no!
Shame not my venturous gait.
Bothwell You shall no more
Pause in a gleaming stupor, but enlinked
Fly to your husband'e castle, and there pay
The sweet embraces due to him. On oath,
I will not plague your lips, my traveller,
Till you have altered guise.
Queen You do not well
To take me to your sea-fort, with my clear
Aboding that we go there to divide
Who left it to be wedded: 'tis the end,
A bare, unblest extreme.
Bothwell The damps have entered
Your health, the fiendful desolation driven
Your wits into the moon.—You have not slung
Your sword aright. As fair as beaten gold
Your neck shines out above the heavy wrap;
There 's no imperfect place in you, except
This error of accoutrement.
Queen Dunbar!
Bothwell You shall not speak it on a burning pant.
Its red towers are not answerable for
The rare effects that bind us. By God's blood,
We must put in for haven from revolt
There where my cannon are, my guns, and strength.
At last an army gathers.
Queen Oh, to spend

Warlike, not over-solitary hours!
To toil, inspire, and marshal. Will you promise
An army?

Bothwell By my life, I will.

Queen Lead on!
There are affairs to settle by the sea:
Waves welter and cry out, but I shall hear
The press of faithful squadrons. (*To* BOTHWELL) Loose my neck,
Then I will follow.

Bothwell (*Apart*) She is changed. O fate,
Re-make her into woman once again,
For she is gone from underneath my hand. (*Exeunt*)

SCENE VI—*Carberry Hill; the camp of the* Lords: LETHINGTON *looks across the valley in the direction of the* QUEEN'S *army on the opposite height*

Lethington Will it be thus, I wonder, hereafter: the borders of the great gulf ranged with ironical faces. Could the sheep and goats but front, would they not blink at one another like the unsound augurs of old? Sheep and goats, sheep and goats! A disastrous partition, for man is of his nature indivisible, and can have but one destiny. It is the misplacing that irks! What pleasure can I have among these precise Protestants, who see a street before their

noses, whatsoe'er the pied landscape discover? How I pine for that rare, lyrical creature I have abjured! When they roused me from my rest in the city to come march against her to Musseburgh, I rubbed my eyes long, and lay listening to the blare of the trumpets, as it were in a stupor. May it be my portion some day from the house-tops to proclaim what these men are, and to see them degraded one by one. For what I fainest would do is to have my mistress in estate, in person, in honour; and when these miscreants take her to their keeping, I doubt not I shall have to labour for her very life. . . . Du Croc has passed to parley with her, but who can reason under this inexorable sun. Not to budge deserves a palm-branch. (*To a soldier arranging a banner*) At work, ho! And on the Sabbath made for man! I marvel at you. Come, unfurl your canvas.

Soldier This banner, sir, is to flap before our army.

Lethington Tut, my man, it will not pay to fight in this dazzle; we must stand still like cows in the heat. (*Nodding, as the soldier unfurls the flag*) Ay, it is pretty and most scriptural! We have here a marvellous sweet babe, pious as the infant Samuel, praying the voiceful air; and in the midst is murdered Abel under a green growing tree. But where is Cain? Here you should figure him, Lord Bothwell, in this corner, with his rumpled brow and villainous, hot face. See, good fellow, they are buying food yonder from the country people. Get to your dinner; I will watch the stuff.

Soldier Surely, for his pieces will buy cheese.—That picture, sir, must make the harlot wince. *Exit*

Lethington To eat and drink
And be religious is all one to them;
I have no superstition; when a man
Is gross in sanctity it gives me qualms.
I wonder is she sitting on the hill,
Or speaking full of kindness to Du Croc,
This tedious summer day. A gallant soul!
And birds, they say, sing sweeter in the cage,
For then they sing of freedom. I must wait
A time to do her good. These fleecy clouds
Of bosomed thunder dull at least the heat.

Enter MORTON

Ho, Morton, do you answer to this charge?
(*Pointing to the banner*)

Morton Is it not bravely pictured? Thus heaven writes
Across the walls of conscience; I would sooner
Be burned alive than leave this infamous,
Vile murder unavenged. My blood grows hot;
God knows I share His hatreds. Riccio first,
Then the limp Catholic, and now this pair
Of married liars. Would that I saw them stretched
Dead at my feet, like those two subtle ones
Who thought upon the value of their land
When bartering for their souls. I have been patient,
The long, slow way God deals with his elect,

Although He will avenge them speedily.
Since Kirk o' Field I kept this orphan-babe
Firm in my thoughts, and stand here now in arms
To compass retribution.

Lethington That shall fall
On me, on you, on that frail innocence,
The earl of Moray?

Morton On the queen herself.
We are but instruments in heaven's high hand.
For better station we must cross the stream,
And take the ridge of Cowsland where the sun
Will not molest us. Grange is with the queen
And there is talk of ending this affray
By single combat of the duke with some
Selected nobleman; but I will stripe
The devil, if he dare to fight with us. *Exit*

(LETHINGTON *lies down, pulls his cap over his brows and listens to the sky-larks*)

Lethington How sunnily they sing!—About their business
In the deep blue. I give religion up,
It is all controversy; but to flute
One's happiness, get wings to it, and fly;
Leaving the realm of question, to create;
Listen, create and listen—in one's bosom
An inexhaustive fount, and from the brain
An ever finer conduit to the ear:
That were felicity that, in the nest,

The twitter of the young ones would not mar.
If this rude canvas did not flap my face
With such a stinging stroke, these battlefields,
That give a statesman leisure in the midst
Of march and counter-march for reverie,
Were not without advantage. I will pen
A new, rare counsel of perfection while
Insurgent passions parley. (*To soldier who re-enters*) Fold
it up! *Exit soldier with banner*

Religion! thou wilt never scan her
The way that brings
To church, nor yet upon a banner
Of kneeling kings:
For know—religion is a manner
Of touching things.

Thou art the sage, and life the fable;
Read what it saith;
Keep but thy spirit firm and stable
Above thy breath,
And, dying, thou shalt be an able
Critic of death.

And so till the sundown settle all.

SCENE VII—*Carberry Hill. The* QUEEN'S *army about her; she wears a countrywoman's dress. Her horse is near. She speaks with* KIRCALDY OF GRANGE

Queen I cannot be so murderous in my soul
To shed my people's blood; while I was sitting
On yonder stone beneath the hawthorn-tree,
I thought of every kind device to shelter
My faithless subjects from their punishment.
But I am dazed; the sun all afternoon
Has streamed upon my head, I cannot hold
Firm converse with myself, and seem to grow
Confused as in a swoon. This long, slow day
Labours with tangled issues.
Grange I am come,
Madam, at your request, and on my knees
Attend your will.
Queen I hear that friends of mine
In parley with your leaders have declared
Their wish for single combat.
Grange To prevent
The slaughter that you dread.
Queen 'Tis very strange!
They gave me to a husband, whom they now,
Because I love not bloodshed, would destroy
Before my eyes.
Grange Have you so little trust

In your good cause and his that you should look
For death as God's award if he should fight?

Queen Sir, he has borne his trial, and the voice
Of law has called him pure.

Grange I wish all men
Believed the judgment.

Queen We are much offended
By any words dishonourably spoken
That touch our husband's honour.

Enter BOTHWELL

Bothwell Is it I
With whom they pick a quarrel? Let them say
What harm I ever did them. I have injured
Not one among them, but have simply wrought
As they desired. I tell you, laird of Grange,
'Tis envy brings them to the field: they see
My eminence and grieve. They never knew
That fortune, like a woman, sits and waits
Longing to feel her conqueror. I won
By sudden rape, I handled destiny
As if she were a prey.

Queen You give no heed
To present business. (*Apart*) As he rode along
High-mounted, with the lion upon my banner,
Flapping about his cheek, I loved him—now
An evil coldness strikes me.

Bothwell Give command,
I am your common soldier, and your will
The only motion in me.
Queen You must fight,
And prove before the armies your acquittal
Was veritable innocence.
Bothwell My sword
Is ready, sir.—Marie, you gave your order
More strictly than you need.
Queen The time is short,
The enemy impatient.
Bothwell (*To* GRANGE) Step aside. (*They converse*)
Queen How dim it is about the woodland's edge;
The twilight seems to rise up from the earth;
I never felt so cheerless. I could wish
To take a needle at my tapestry,
And at an open window sit and sing;
It would be less monotonous by far
Than this uncertainty that stuns my head,—
All the vague action that has circled me,
And made me like a stranger to myself
Hour after hour. Although the evening grows
More intimate and nearer I can watch
Our weary soldiers, parting from their ranks
In search of food and drink; the army sunders
In tired confusion. I shall let him fight,
Though I refused this morning. I am hard,
His fires have burnt me hard as in the oven

The soft, responsive clay. He ever was
To me a faithful subject, and my soul
Was built upon his loyalty, until
I found that as a lover he could do
Stern treason, and could wrong me in such sort
As turns affection marble. It is fearful
To have this vile disease within the heart,
This cold paralysis, to long for cure,
Yet to remain inveterately dead
Just where you once were loving and divine,
And soft compassion pained you.

Bothwell (*To the* QUEEN) All is settled.
The laird of Grange would bid adieu.

Queen God speed!
I will receive the lords if they repent,
And turn away my anger.

Grange Our condition
The duke of Orkney grants—that he should meet
A peer, and prove his cause.

Bothwell I will.

Queen Adieu. *Exit* GRANGE

Bothwell (*Unsheathing his sword*) It shines a confident, fine-tempered blade
As ever did good work. You tremble, Marie,
Yet not the wifely way. This pensive lip,
These dreaming eyes! O lass, I wield the sword
To keep you ever mine, to hold from foes
My prize, my love, my crown. Before I smite

And triumph, kiss me with warm mouth, and breathe
Success! between the kisses.

Queen Ha, I am
Too tired and anxious to encourage you;
And, James, you are so bravely made, so doughty,
You need no pricking words. Turn, I will fasten
Your scarf more firmly; you have ever loved
The gayest colours, fie!

Bothwell They are more royal,
More wealthy than all others, have the front
To capture sight. Well, these are perfect hands
Knotting my plaid, but in an hour, I tell you,
They will be busy with my corpse, if thus
You send me forth to battle. Do you care
That I should win, or are you so estranged
You will give welcome to the laird of Grange
If with soft manners he report me slain,—
Curse him!—and lead you to a widowed throne?

Queen James, if my love is dead, it is your hand
Hath murdered it, and all that now is left
Is a long night of mourning. Oh, I feel
Stricken and hopeless as a mother bird
Covering her callow brood when there's no warmth,
No twitter in the nest; the use of loving
Was over long ago.

Bothwell The wanton birds
Get them new mates.

Queen The linnet, broken-winged,

Dies in a bright-eyed silence 'neath the bush.
Think not, if death should take you, any more
There can be mirth in Mary Stuart's heart,
But fond with her old fondness, she will build
Her life upon some relic of the past,
As many stately priories have been founded
Over a heap of long-since mouldered bones.
All will be recollection.

Bothwell Must I fight
For a mere shade ?—Confound their trickery !
They move their squadrons ; I must hasten yonder
Before they snatch advantage. *Exit*

Queen (*Looking anxiously over the field*) Is it so ?
I will awake and reason, win his safety ;
And then—O God ! there is another knot
I must untie, release him from myself.

(*She hastily writes a message and gives it to a* Soldier)

Bear this to the encampment. *Exit* Soldier
I must act
For him—then take possession of my sole,
Unflawed estate, my sovereignty, and draw
Down slowly on base, unsuspecting heads
Such retribution as God pays for wrongs
Done to His honour ; I will lift myself
Among the kings and punish.
A rare love
Sustains me : wheresoe'er I lie to-night

He will be safe, I shall not have a care.
I think I shall sleep on through many days
And nights just dreaming that I do not dream;
There is no other comfort.

Re-enter GRANGE

Kircaldy,
Hear my brief terms: if you are willing now
To take me to your ranks I will return
In single royalty, bespeaking mere
Safe-conduct for my husband, no pursuit.

Grange Most just conditions. Madam, you have won
To-day a signal triumph.

Re-enter BOTHWELL *at a distance.*

Queen Leave me, Grange;
While you make final parley with the lords
I will convey my pleasure to the duke,
And speed him from my presence.

(*Seeing* BOTHWELL *bidding an arquebusier aim at* GRANGE)

Haste, the guard
About me is provoked at your delay,
Repression, change of front. God's peace! they shoot
Unless you leave the ground. *Exit* GRANGE

(*Angrily to* BOTHWELL) You know he lies
Beneath my great protection: would you slur
My queenly faith, and 'gainst an embassy

Level your lawless weapons?

Bothwell A dull face
Watched me away; the lights are burning now
Athwart your lips and eyes. O Marie, Marie,
I know that you are false; you have made terms
To hand me to the headsman. Give the news!
And so you never meant that I should fight,
You have been busy fooling me all day,
Wrecking and fooling. May you never know
The agony of loving with such hate.

(*He covers his face with his hands, she moves toward him, then controls herself, turns back, and stands apart*)

Queen The steep and rending moment comes at last,
Comes with the sunset. (*To* BOTHWELL) I have fixed my will;
You cannot win the day now day is done.
I am a queen, and must resume the rule,
And heed the counsel of my subjects: therefore
I pass across the valley to the lords,
And you in safety ride back to Dunbar.
'Tis so I have determined.

Bothwell Earth and sea!
How dare you speak like this? Impossible,
Exclusive voice, that smites like ugliness,
As if a magic woman had been changed
To dragon in a second. At Dunbar
My walls were round you; now, in open air,

You look out on that army of your foes,
And my poor, melted ranks.
Queen We must be brief.
Imperial guidance in my nature draws me
Over the valley : I must follow it,
And part with you.
Bothwell The impulse is a fool's !
Those men are traitors, and their crime is greedy
For its occasion. Love, return, return
To yon siege-proof Dunbar, and I will fight
To the last drop of blood to keep you mine ;
To-day I should have conquered, if the battle
Had not been struck with paralytic sun.
Queen Grange brings me pledge of loyalty. My lord,
Where you have used me ill I have forgiven,
And signed away your treason : if my realm
Raise charges of another dye against you,
With claim for scrutiny more liberal
Than what acquitted you, I stand your help
And your protection, until innocence
Is reconfirmed.
Bothwell I might as well be dead,
A ghost in my despair. I find but ice,
When I have reached the summit o' the world,
And thought its poles were mine.
Queen O James, I freeze,
Because so much is dying in my heart
Ere we can kiss and sever.

Bothwell Come along,
Break from this stagnant hill-side, where I feel
As if the fates in yonder setting sky
Prepared for us imprisonment. My swift,
Free-tempered wife, come with me to Dunbar;
I will defend you, while beneath your feet
Will sway the chainless waters. I implore,
Not as the consort of your sovereignty,
But as a man who loves you. Do not sweep
The great brim of your hat across your face,
And leave me but that crystal ball, your chin,
For divination of my future lot;
Grant me your eyes.

Queen We have short space of time,
Short moments; Grange is coming from the camp.

Bothwell You often longed to leave your kingdom, sail
For liberty away; to greet the foam
By loosened hair on wind-washed cheek; to slip
Within revolving, spheral influence,
To wayfare through the world. We will escape
Aboard—

Queen Ah, let me think of you at sea;
Have joy in taming what you cannot tame,
The pliant, dauntless swell.

Bothwell In hearing of
The ocean's sough, we yet can hold Dunbar—
Those stout and ruddy stones that dye with red

The swinging tides. Be dominant, recall
Black Agnes and her feminine defence,
My Amazon!—You will not turn your eyes,
Your indiscoverable, watchful eyes;
I know they weep within the orbs, while mine
Are wet with anguish.

Queen (*Half-apart*) How the worst of wrong
Is the new wrong one does to set it right!
Even God, our God, must make a hell to chasten
The evil He permits: O heart, this voice
Will break me into ruin!

Bothwell For one night
Turn back to refuge,—that the Hamiltons
May find us with their strength. You ever loved
A cool, dawn-ended gallop.

Queen For my crown
I fled this way these eighteen months long passed.

Bothwell For that fly now.

Queen Grange renders me allegiance,
An oath of loyalty.

Bothwell The very grain
And compass of my nature questions you—
Will you not come?

Queen I cannot.

Bothwell This wild stroke
Dashes my hopes out.

(*He casts himself down on a rock.* GRANGE *rides up; the* QUEEN *meets him*)

Grange Let me kiss your hand ;
The lords, your honest subjects, welcome you
Whom they alone obey.

(*She bows and motions* GRANGE *to go further off ; then returns to* BOTHWELL, *who springs fiercely up*)

Queen We must not think,
No, not even speak . . . but kiss.

Bothwell I will not come
To trial, if invited. I have more
Of fiendish pride than that. Shall murderer
Be judged by fellow-murderer ? Ha, ha !
That were fine reformation in the state ;
I'm for old ways of justice anyhow.
Look here, my lady ! (*Holding out a parchment*)

Queen How his swollen, white lip
Is terrible !—Explain !

Bothwell I let you choose
The company you are so sweet upon.
Here in this bond are stainless signatures,
Morton and Moray, Lethington, Argyle.
See, see ! And for the purpose—what is that ?
The king's destruction.

Queen And *you* hold the bond,
Then . . . .

Bothwell You shall make no blab. I throw myself
Upon your honour in extreme attempt
To save you. In the mitigating light

Of your sweet face, and kneeling as to one
White in the heavens, I now confess my guilt;
Yet though you walked aloft so clean and proud,
It was your will that wrought at Kirk o' Field,
Your will that made me a black, blasted devil:
You have not a frank, amorous face for naught—
To watch the change of climate on your cheek
Is all-sufficing. Do not turn from me,
As if a statue took possession of
Your breathing frame. O Marie! I am lone
As Adam on the sod before his bliss,
His woman girt him, if you turn away.
All I have done is horror in my nights,
And follows day like pestilence—all, all,
Was done for you: demoniac and lovely
You came to rule me; do not start; I plead
That when you entered me you were no more
The queen, the lady—but a temptress love;
It was no fault of yours; we cannot tell
How we drop down in other natures. I
Was born half-wizard on my southern hills.
A bandit like my sires, a worshipper
Of rich, exalted women . . . and you set
My elements a-flame. Such wrought desire
Will murder, ravish, spell-bind. I shall grasp
Your wrists until you soften.

Queen Loose! Farewell!
There is no circle of God's ire for pain

Like this horizon; yet I stay alive—
The wonder breath provides for. And this bond . . ?
Bothwell Keep it with care, it is my testament;
And I am for the whirlwind—for no bonds
Of marriage or of fellowship henceforth.
The falsehood of the universe is gathered
In vow and pact; goodbye to them, goodbye
To you! There stands my horse, there are my towers!
You know your men, you know how merrily
They will receive you. We shall never meet
Again. At least I catch your hand and kiss
Where Grange has kissed the finger that I ringed.
Death, I must go!
Queen We write to you our will.
(*He leaps on his horse*)
Be strong in me, my terror; hold me up
From where a gulf has opened! My whole life
Will see that form a' riding to the glare
Of far-off sunset. (*Dropping the parchment*) Laird of Grange, I come.
We have what is the calm of sovereignty,
That faith it has in subjects.
Grange See, the lords
Advance their arms and ranks to compass you,
As with a land's embrace.
(*He stoops and snatches the bond up*)

Enter MORTON, ARGYLE, Lords, *and* Army

Queen (*To* MORTON) We had no will
To shed enfiefèd blood; and therefore freely
Join you, our earls and nobles, that together
We may unravel discord and present
To foreign gaze accompt.

Morton (*Kneeling*) You find yourself
Where you pertain, among your lieges, madam,
And we will hold you fast!

Cry Burn her!

Queen (*Apart*) *His* lips
Are far away. What is it that is thrown?
I am not wholly queen above myself;
I have unsettling fancies. Lead me on,
Deep to your trusty centre. There are smiles,
Though I am over spent. When I have rested
I shall breathe olden life in all I do.
Ah, my good people! . . . . . Mercy, what is this!
Why flap this buried man? Would I had never
Seen him before! I know he looked like that—
So long in his long coffin—and the child!
I've clapped those chubby fingers in my palm
That point to point beg vengeance of the Lord;
For once I heard a little, lonesome cry,
And then a voice that said I had a son.

Cries The murderess, ha, the murderess!

Queen I would rather
Hear of the evil that I have not done,
Than do the evil of which nought is heard,
So greater far is my respect for God—
Whom no man can deceive, who sees the drop
Of light at the well-bottom—than for man,
The misconceiving witness. I have never
Worn mask to God; before Him I could lie
As a white effigy, and let Him probe
Through to my soul. I have great need of pardon
For sins of which you cannot take account.
Cries Burn her—the witch, the harlot!
Queen (*Wildly*) Is it hell?
Why this is Morton, Grange is striking out
To stop the spume. Look yonder, noblemen,
Strike down that standard . . . . Will it never cease
To write its libel on yon wall of sky?
Have I not made an edict that no words
Shall be set up for scandal morn or eve?
Are queenship and executive gone too?
Have they been ravished from me? I am sinking
To impotence amid such scrannel whirr
As ship whose helm and birthright government
Are taken by a sea. How strange and deep!
Kneel down, repeat your oaths of fealty—Down,
Down! (*She faints*)
Morton We have worked most manifest detection.
Press on, for darkness loads the west, a rabble

Is waiting to give cheer of Christian voices
To this high-browed adulteress, in the town.
Her hat falls off—St. Bride! her clothes are short;
Her face is blurred with evil and with tire;
She looks a thing to put away; and shortly
There must be talk of prison or of death
For her, and for her lawful son the honours
She trails into the dust. Her shameless eyes
Open, grow hot, dilate: she raves and throbs.

Queen (*In frenzy*) God speed him over seas, my lawless love;
God stop that small, defaming, pious cry,
Blazon the deed of Kirk o' Field as just,
And set the great Lord Warden o'er the world!
Would we not judge together, he and I,
Uproot these trembling, vile hypocrisies,
Recall untempered love from banishment,
And make a progress down the Canongate,
Constraining all men to our gaiety!
How vile was our false wedding, vile the banns,
The ritual—dear the rape, the ride along
The High Street with my king at bridle rein;
So should Queen Mary flaunt upon a banner
Subject, subjecting. I would follow him
In my wild, woman-scanted Highland dress
Across the world. Has he yet reached the shore,
My rough free-booter? Who craves audience now?
I choke with wrath; these scalding, vengeful tears,

Breed in my head; they cast a torchlight glare
Athwart the past, and fall in fiery sparks.
We pay for truth by madness. Give your hand,
Morton, and your's, Argyle, to squeeze in mine:
We have been fellows in deception, boldly
Wearing false hearts; but when I am a queen
Again, the axe shall split them into ruin,
And I shall swing the axe, for I am saved
Through foam and horror. I have still myself
To set within myself and crown, the true
Religion to give faith to, a lost love
To weep for through the long captivity
Of unenjoying years, and the whole earth
To gain, when I have repossessed my soul.

NOTE

THE title of this play is taken, with his consent, from the following passage of Mr. Pater's Essay on Rossetti in his Volume of *Appreciations*, (page 240):—

Old Scotch history, perhaps beyond any other, is strong in the matter of heroic and vehement hatreds and love, the tragic Mary herself being but the perfect blossom of them.

To him, as to the friends who have aided me in research and by suggestion, my thanks are proffered. My indebtedness to historians, living and dead, it would be impossible to acknowledge: but of Mr. Skelton's charming and animated work, *Maitland of Lethington*, I desire to make special mention. The Lethington of these pages owes his existence to Mr. Skelton's portrait; at the same time, since many imaginings have been added to the historic delineation, I must be held wholly responsible for my dramatic treatment of Mary Stuart's minister.

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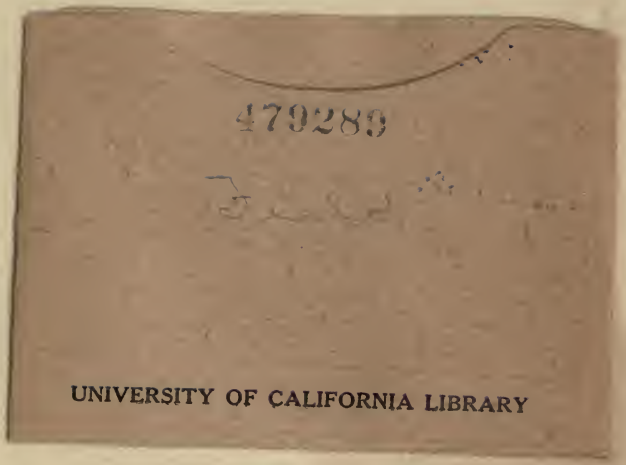

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The Tragic
Mary